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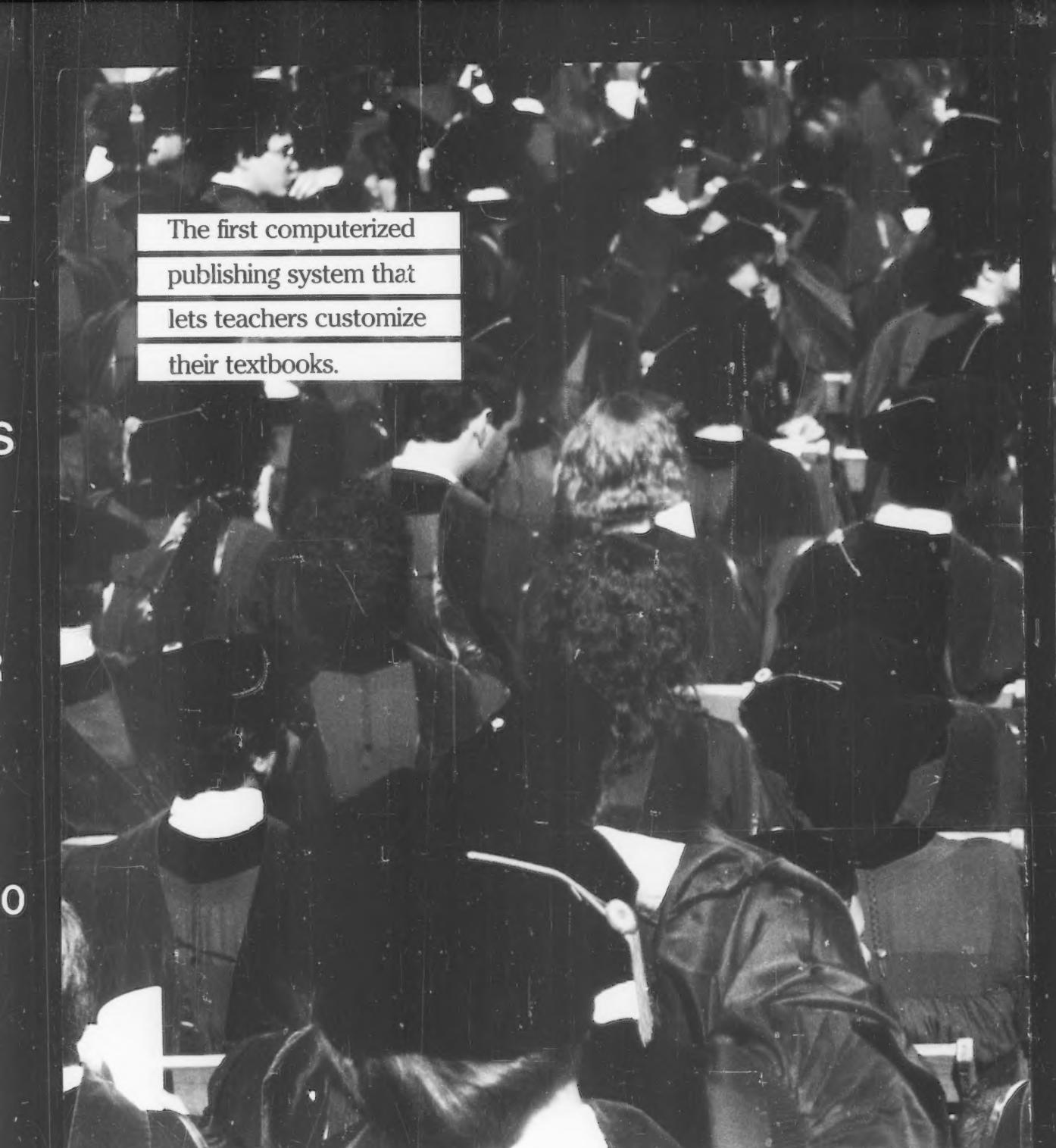
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The media's one and only freedom story

Absorbed in covering the momentous events in Eastern Europe, the U.S. media failed to report on a big — and closely related — story played out on this side of the Atlantic

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Cover photo: R. Bossu/Sygma

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"TO ASSESS
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OF JOURNALISM...
TO HELP STIMULATE
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AND TO SPEAK OUT
FOR WHAT IS
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From the
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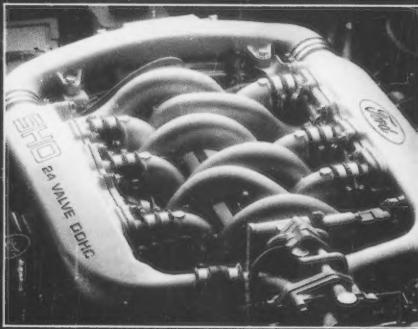
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BETRAYING THE SOURCE

◆
HOW THE U.S. PRESS HELPS FINGER PROTESTORS ABROAD

◆
Ignoring the lesson of Xiao Bin

For every minute of foreign news that appears on CBS, NBC, ABC, and CNN, the networks have boiled down hours of raw footage sent from abroad. Most of that footage is sent by satellite, and can easily be intercepted by intelligence services of the countries described in the stories. It is sometimes used by those services to identify and prosecute people who talk to the press or appear in anti-government demonstrations, even if their statements are never aired.

China's crackdown on student protesters in Beijing last summer provided a dramatic illustration of this widespread practice. Several days after the June 4 massacre in Tiananmen Square, Chinese state television ran a long excerpt from an ABC interview with a man named Xiao Bin, who said he had witnessed the bloodshed. A commentator told viewers the man was wanted by the police on charges of "spreading rumors." Xiao Bin was turned in within an hour and has since been sentenced to ten years in a labor camp.

ABC News had not broadcast the footage used by Chinese television and thinks that Beijing's intelligence service must have intercepted the satellite feed as it reached the U.S. "We were taken completely by surprise," says Robert Murphy, ABC's vice-president for news coverage. Recently, China launched a new wave of arrests and investigations. U.S. officials say it is widely believed in China that the latest detentions are based in part on pilfered American television footage of last summer's demonstrations.

Electronic spying is by no means unique to China. Many reporters stationed overseas assume their cables are being read; some have been able to confirm that this is the case. Michael Kaufman, a former *New York Times* bureau chief in Warsaw, remembers being called by a government spokesman in Poland to talk about a story Kaufman had filed to New York. "I was rather startled because that piece had not yet appeared," Kaufman says. Similar tales are told by *Time* magazine correspondents who have served in the Soviet Union, India, and Ethiopia.

Videotape confiscated from American television crews has been used to prosecute political offenders in South Africa. In Israel, soldiers recently seized three videocassettes from the home of Taher Shriteh, a Gaza City journalist who reports on the *intifada* for *The New York Times* and for CBS News. "The only thing I'm afraid of," says Shriteh, "is that the military has pictures of people in demonstrations and that they will be arrested and punished — and I will be responsible for all of that."

Nor is reporters' information necessarily safe at home. Most long-distance communications within the U.S. travel by satellite or microwave; either way the message can be easily intercepted. Although the U.S. government has used various technologies to shield most of its own classified communications during the past ten years, a 1986 Senate intel-

ligence committee report notes that the Soviet Union continues to spend large sums of money to operate and expand facilities in this country and in Cuba designed to intercept U.S. communications. The report concludes that the Soviets must consider unclassified and private-sector messages worth the investment. Intelligence sources say that the Soviets have specifically targeted the electronic message traffic of U.S. media organizations within the U.S.

Government and private security experts say the press does not have to exhibit this come-and-get-me vulnerability. "There's a lot of tsk-tsk and not a lot of using the technology available to solve the problem," says Elliot Maxwell, a former deputy chief scientist at the Federal Communications Commission. Robert Courtney, a former director of computer security and privacy for IBM, says satellite communications that can be intercepted can also be protected — through electronic coding. "The problem is a reluctance to spend the money because we can't assess the risk very well," he says.

The media's response to the Xiao Bin incident is a case in point. ABC said it was shocked by what had happened to Xiao Bin and rushed scrambling equipment to its Asian bureaus. The devices, comparable to those used by many cable TV operators, were better than nothing but unlikely to seriously inconvenience the Chinese intelligence service. In any

both: courtesy ABC News



WANTED: After Xiao Bin talked to ABC, Chinese TV aired the stolen footage and called for his arrest.

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case, the network did not send similar equipment to its bureaus in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Israel, South Africa, and other countries where the same problem was likely to arise. In fact, says ABC's Murphy, the equipment sent to Asia has since been returned.

The other American networks — CBS, NBC, and CNN — didn't scramble their feeds from China at all. Instead, they obscured the faces of Chinese who asked not to be identified. However, since this was done only after the footage was received by satellite in New York, and only for footage that was actually broadcast, it did little to protect the people who had entrusted their safety to U.S. reporters.

Jay Peterzell

Peterzell covers national security affairs for Time magazine.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

◆
WHAT HAPPENED WHEN NAVAJO REPORTERS WENT AFTER TRIBAL LEADER PETER MACDONALD

◆
Tradition vs. Journalism

Navajo reporter Betty Reid remembers the day when, at the age of seven, she stood beside her grandmother watching the sky grow dark over the western reservation community of Bodaway. "Lightning was crashing," Reid recalls. "Seemed like the heavens were about to explode." The bolts came closer and closer to the earth, toward the family's hogan and corral, and Reid's grandmother looked up. "Wódahgo," she said sharply, four times. "Stay above!"

"It was so peaceful after that," Reid remembers, "I was amazed." Reid also remembers her grandmother's explanation: "Words have power."

Twenty-two years later, writing for the *Gallup*, New Mexico, *Independent*, Reid demonstrated that her grandmother's lesson applies to the written word



both: Monty Rossell

"GOSSIPER":
When reporter Betty Reid (left) broke the story that brought down tribal leader Peter MacDonald (above), she was labeled a traitor to her Navajo heritage.

as well. Following up on a tip, Reid, a year out of journalism school at the University of Colorado, reported a questionable ranch purchase engineered by Navajo tribal chairman Peter MacDonald. The people who sold the 491,000-acre Big Boquillas ranch to the tribe, she wrote, had bought the same property only five minutes earlier — for \$7.2 million less. It was later revealed that the buyers were associates of MacDonald's.

"Bo-Gate" resulted in scores of newspaper stories, internal tribal investigations, more revelations before a U.S. Senate investigative committee, and, ultimately, the downfall of Peter MacDonald. The Navajo Tribal Council, with the backing of thousands of people across the reservation, removed MacDonald from office in February 1989. He faces ninety-eight charges in tribal court — from bribery to kickbacks to campaign finance violations — and possible indictment by a federal grand jury in Phoenix.

But during the crisis in the Navajo government that spanned most of 1989, Reid and other reporters on the reser-

vation found themselves caught between two powerful forces: the traditional beliefs, rooted in oral tradition, of Navajos like Reid's grandmother, and the demands of journalism.

Reid and other native American reporters wrote strong, hard-hitting reports about MacDonald, but in covering the story they were labeled traitors by many traditional Navajos, who put more trust in MacDonald's words than in English-language newspapers they couldn't read. Some of the anger directed against Reid came from her own aunts, staunch MacDonald supporters. "You had kin-folk against kin-folk in this dispute," she says.

In the midst of the crisis, the situation got so tense that Reid drove home to Bodaway for a protection ceremony in her family's hogan. A medicine man sang the Navajo Beauty Way and sprinkled corn pollen on her for protection. "It made me more determined to cover this," she says.

Reid understood that to many traditional supporters of MacDonald, respect for a long-standing tribal leader is paramount. Exposing tribal corruption to

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This philosophy inspired *Agweek*, of Grand Forks, N.D., to set up a toll-free number for questions about a new drought-relief law. It prompted the *San Jose Mercury News* to stretch its deadlines to accommodate a retailer when a direct mail house wouldn't stretch theirs. It inspired the *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch* to have editors man the customer complaint phone lines.

And, of course, it led to the midnight ride of Tom Szczepanski.

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Knight-Ridder, which recorded its 14th year of earnings per share growth in 1989, is a worldwide communications company with business information services, cable systems and 29 daily newspapers.

CHRONICLE

the outside world is considered disrespectful. "There's no word for reporter in Navajo," she says. "The translation is 'gossiper.' You're dealing with a society where the spoken word is much more important than the written."

While Reid and other reporters used the printed word to hold the Navajo leader accountable for his actions, MacDonald brought his powerful parables, laced with references to Navajo culture, to the hogans and chapter houses of the vast reservation.

Meanwhile, MacDonald tried to control the press. In 1988, for example, Marley Shebala, news director of the tribal radio station, was let go after she continued to cover the Big Boquillas scandal despite warnings from MacDonald's aides. "My news was being

broadcast in Navajo. And they just couldn't stand for that," says Shebala, a Navajo who now reports for the Farmington, New Mexico, *Daily Times*.

Earlier, in February 1987, five weeks into his fourth term, the chairman shut down the fiercely independent *Navajo Times Today* and fired its employees (see "Navajoland: The Death of a Daily," CJR, September/October 1987). The paper, which in 1983 became the first Indian-run daily in the country, had been an important community forum and a training ground for Navajo journalists, including Betty Reid.

"Navajo leaders tell us to go to college, get an education, go experience life, and come back and help the peo-

ple," Reid says. "And you work your butt off, get a degree, go to the *Navajo Times*, get hired, and then you start writing. And then the lights go out. It's really strange. The *Navajo Times* was like a baby. We put our hearts and souls into that paper."

The former employees of *Navajo Times Today* work for other papers. But Reid, Shebala, and other reporters share a dream of bringing the printed word to the Navajo people — eventually, they hope, through a truly independent, Navajo-owned, Navajo-run daily newspaper. "A paper that no one could touch," Shebala says.

Sandy Tolan

Tolan is director of Desert West News, an independent news agency in Tucson.

INSIDE TRAC

A NEW COMPUTER SERVICE DIGS UP DATA FOR WATCHDOGS

In *The Rise of the Computer State*, David Burnham, a seasoned investigative reporter, charged that computers were increasing the power of large organizations and reducing the freedom of individual citizens. The book was published in 1983. Now, seven years later, he is fighting to regain that lost freedom with a very effective weapon — the computer.

In June 1987, Burnham, now an associate research professor at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, was writing *A Law Unto Itself: Power, Politics and the IRS*, his recently published in-

vestigation of the Internal Revenue Service. He approached Susan Long — an associate professor of quantitative methods at Syracuse University's School of Management who had access to sophisticated computers and was an expert on the IRS — with a request to provide tables and charts for his book. On the plane ride back to Washington, it occurred to Burnham that such a combination of reporter and researcher could pry open just the kind of doors that regulatory agencies often want to keep shut. TRAC, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, was born.

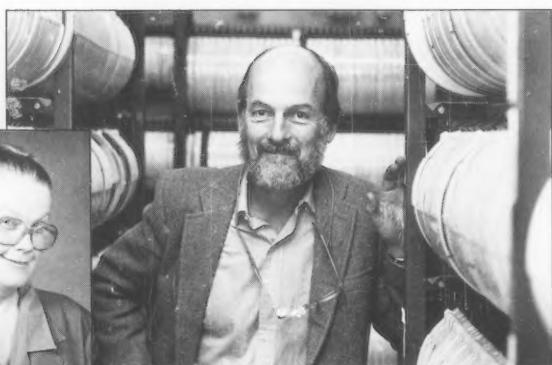
TRAC's mission is ambitious — to

tap into the huge volume of information kept by federal enforcement agencies (such as the Justice Department and the IRS) and available to the public through the Freedom of Information Act, crunch and analyze that information using sophisticated computers and software, and distribute it in readable and graphic form to the press and other watchdog groups to help them judge for themselves how well the various agencies are serving the public.

For its pilot study, TRAC plugged into a computer tape that contained the entire docket of the 5.5 million criminal and civil cases brought in federal court from 1970-87, and performed a five-and-one-half-month analysis of eleven big city districts.

The work paid off. The study found that the overall number of criminal cases that were actually brought to trial steadily declined during this period even though all of the districts studied were urban and had roughly the same rates of reported crimes. Further, wide variations were found in the level of criminal enforcement from district to district, suggesting that justice was not so even-handed after all.

Before this study, Burnham says, reporters were forced to rely on handouts from the prosecutors, "press releases saying that they have indicted Joe Mafioso. There is no coverage of their general enforcement effort, what they don't investigate." This is also the first time



CJR/David B. Grunfeld
Syracuse University Photo Center

BREAKING THE (DATA) BANK: Investigative reporter David Burnham (left) and computer expert Susan Long (far left) have teamed up to provide data which journalists can use to check up on how well federal agencies are doing their jobs.

anyone has compared the performance of U.S. attorneys, Burnham claims.

On October 21, 1989, Burnham distributed the 189-page study, complete with charts and graphs, to forty news organizations. Several papers, including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *New York Newsday*, picked up the story. Dennis Bell, a *Newsday* reporter who used the study to write an article about the Southern District (Manhattan, the Bronx, and several upstate counties) in New York, found TRAC's information a good jumping off point. "Some people call it lazy reporting because the computer does all the work for you," he says. "I don't. I think it's taking the available technology and pushing it to the limit. And then you go ahead and start reporting the story."

Ronald Ostrow, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter who also developed a story using TRAC's data, says TRAC's independence is an advantage. "When you are given data from, say, the Justice Department, you're watching someone evaluate themselves. It's always suspect."

At the same time, TRAC's numbers can leave reporters feeling adrift in a sea of data. Ostrow, for one, would have preferred more analysis. "You have to find out what it means," he says. "I like someone who's familiar with the data to say what it means. Then, if someone wants to shoot it down, I'll include it in the story. I feel uneasy making those kind of judgments myself."

TRAC's focus initially will be on the Justice Department, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the IRS, simply because both Burnham and Susan Long have expertise in these areas. (Burnham covered the criminal justice system for *The New York Times* for seven years and the NRC for six — he was the reporter Karen Silkwood was on her way to meet when she died in a mysterious car crash; Long, a sociologist and statistician, has been gathering data on the IRS for the past fifteen years.) For now, news organizations cannot commission TRAC to analyze any agency beyond these three, although they can hire TRAC for more detailed research on any of them.

Tracey L. Miller

Miller is CJR's editorial assistant.

BALLOONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT — JUST THE FACTS —

Recently, a good deal of misinformation has made its way into the news media regarding the effects of balloon releases on the environment. We feel it is important to set the record straight.

● **FACT:** The Qualatex® latex balloons produced by Pioneer Balloon Company (and most other latex balloons) are made of 100% natural latex. Natural latex is the sap of the rubber tree, and is fully biodegradable. As with any natural product, degradation time varies depending on the specific environment — it is safe to say, however, that under similar conditions a latex balloon will biodegrade at about the same speed as a leaf from an oak tree.

● **FACT:** There is no evidence that balloons from latex balloon releases will adversely affect sea life. While many stories have made their way into the press and are often presented as fact, extensive research has found that there are no known deaths of sea life directly attributable to latex balloons. Oftentimes inaccurate information from an original source is "confirmed" by others who are not speaking from direct knowledge — but rather from having read the original source. This process has created a self-confirming circle of misinformation.

● **FACT:** The issue of whether latex balloons harm the environment has been argued in court. On October 20, 1988, the United States District Court in Seattle denied an injunction to stop a balloon release. The court stated that there was no probable cause that balloons harm the environment.

● **FACT:** Some well-meaning, concerned people have targeted and attacked balloon releases in an attempt to dramatize their concern for the environment. While we respect their concern — and agree that society must protect our environment — we feel their misuse of the press by disseminating inaccurate information about balloons deflects attention from the real, serious problems of ocean pollution. Unfortunately, this ultimately hurts us all.

● **FACT:** Companies most often hurt by this misinformation campaign are local, small, independent businesses which do not have the expertise or resources to make the facts known.

If you are considering running a story on balloons, please take the time to get all the facts.



For more information, contact:
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FOREIGN INTRIGUED

HOW A SMALL MIDWESTERN PAPER
BRINGS WORLD NEWS HOME

For decades, Madison's *Wisconsin State Journal* was predictable, provincial, and haphazardly laid out, a mid-sized newspaper published in a town with a world-

CHRONICLE

class university and a reputation for alert, politically active citizens. To keep up with important national, financial, cultural, and, especially, foreign news, serious newspaper readers looked beyond the *State Journal* and its smaller, more liberal afternoon competitor, *The Capital Times*, to papers from Milwaukee, Chicago, and New York.

Three years ago, however, things began to change; the *State Journal* got a new editor, Frank Denton, only its

fourth in nearly half a century. Denton, a former assistant managing editor of the *Detroit Free Press*, drafted an aggressive program to revitalize the paper. Surprisingly, in a town thousands of miles from any foreign border except Canada's, one of his key changes was to emphasize foreign news.

Denton, who once backpacked his way around the world, says a readership survey supported that innovation. Readers said they considered foreign news more important than even University of Wisconsin sports news.

His approach to world news was to look for a local angle. One way to do that is to find local experts. Denton says he was frustrated by "stories out of Washington that might quote somebody in the Pentagon or the State Department analyzing a development in Saudi Arabia or Central Africa when, in fact, one of the world's foremost experts on Central Africa is right here — Crawford Young at the university."

Denton created a databank of Crawford Youngs — people in the area with special knowledge of countries and regions — to help his reporters analyze the local economic or social relevance of foreign news events. When riots broke out in Venezuela a year ago, for example, Susan Zaeske checked the databank and found that the Madison-based Oscar Mayer Foods Corporation had four sales offices there and two plants that employ hundreds of people. She called Eugene Jarrel, the company's senior vice-president for international operations, to find out how the unrest had affected Oscar Mayer's operations. Jarrel also helped her enlarge the story by pointing out that Oscar Mayer is one of several state firms with interests in Venezuela, a growing market for the state's dairy cattle and farming equipment.

On occasion Denton and national/foreign editor Anita Clark send a reporter abroad. Because of Madison's sister-city relationship with Arcatao, a war-battered Salvadoran town, for example, the paper assigned Betty Brickson to cover the elections there last spring. An invitation to exchange reporters with a paper in Goettingen, a university city in West Germany, gave the *State Journal* an opportunity to explore another way of bringing foreign news home. (See Darts and Laurels, CJR, July/August 1989).

Inside the Media

BEYOND MALICE: *The Media's Years of Reckoning*

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Nina Malmsten

Malmsten, who was born in Finland, is a reporter for the News-Chronicle in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

CITY EDITION

SELLING STREET NEWS
TO GET OFF THE STREET

Robert Cooper doesn't have time to talk anymore. Heading uptown on a half-full, late-night subway, the formerly unemployed and homeless man readily admits that a few months ago he could spend all day gabbing to anyone who would listen. Now, interrupting a question, he says, "I don't mean to be rude, but I've got 200 more papers to sell."

What's put the hustle into Cooper's life is *Street News*, a tabloid monthly that premiered on the streets of New York in November and is expected to hit Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia later this year. According to Wendy Koltun, one of the paper's publishers, *Street News* is an attempt to help the homeless by providing them a means to help themselves. "We're trying to find an alternative to the tin cup," she says.

The paper, which hires any homeless person willing to put in the hours, employs a sales staff of more than 800 men and women, who work strictly on commission. For every 75-cent paper sold the salesperson keeps 50 cents, as well as a nickel that goes into a mandatory savings plan to be used only to obtain a place to live. There are bonuses, too: The sale of 500 papers earns a winter parka; and for teaching a new recruit how to sell, a salesperson receives extra money and free newspapers.

Street News has also had the effect of reaching some New Yorkers in an age when they feel besieged by beggars. "It's not so much the paper itself," says one New Yorker. "But I feel like they're

CHRONICLE

actually working and not just trying to get something for nothing."

The newspaper is the brainchild of Koltun, thirty-one, and Hutchinson Persons, thirty-three, co-directors of the not-for-profit organization Street Aid. Their first plan, back in August 1988, was to make use of Persons's background as a rock musician and an organizer of Live-Aid — the rock extravaganza to benefit starving Ethiopians — to put together a few concerts to collect

food for the homeless. But an economist friend persuaded Persons that providing a way out of homelessness was more valuable than providing some meals.

Despite the fact that neither Persons nor Koltun had any experience in publishing, a newspaper seemed like a natural. "First, if a person can panhandle they can put the same amount of energy and skill into selling a newspaper," says Koltun. "It also seemed like a good way to raise people's awareness about the homeless."

The first couple of issues were an odd

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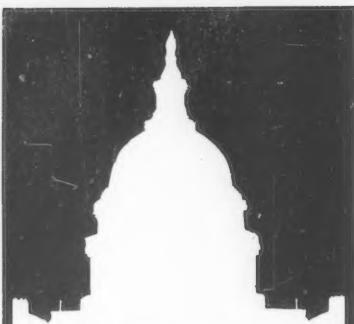
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mix: celebrities on homelessness (Jerry Greenfield, of Ben & Jerry's ice cream), celebrities on their lives (New York Ranger goalie John Vanbiesbrouck on the birth of his son), poems (one by rocker Lou Reed), editorials, a section where artists interpret one of their own works of art, and a page of help-wanted ads and job-training notices for the homeless. "We were more interested in getting the paper onto the streets and giving people jobs than we were about focus," Koltun concedes. "We chose celebrities for the first cover because we figured that's what sells magazines. In the next couple of issues we're trying to become more focused on the problems of the homeless."

Street Aid's venture into journalism seems to have antagonized several other relief agencies. Kristin Morse of the Coalition For The Homeless, for example, finds *Street News* "exploitive. It's a way to appeal to yuppies. It allows them to forget about the homeless problem for the price of a newspaper without addressing the real issues of affordable housing and mental care."

Joel Sesser of the Partnership for the Homeless finds the *Street News* idea "too simplistic a solution. Just giving some people a job isn't going to solve the homeless problem. There are a number of people out there too sick to work."

Persons says Street Aid doesn't pretend to be more than a stopgap measure to reintegrate the homeless into society. "Can you think of another job where you don't need an address, a telephone, or

even clean clothes to work?" he says.

Criticism notwithstanding, *Street News* has gained a group of influential media allies. New York's four dailies and the weekly *Village Voice* have offered support and taken advertisements. Also, *The New York Times* has provided *Street News* with a marketing plan and the paper's vendors with their first supply of hats, aprons, and T-shirts. "It's a novel idea that I really liked," says Lance Primis, president of *The New York Times*. "It's real easy to write a check and forget about the person, but if we can actually provide the people with a means of support, so much the better."

The average *Street News* salesperson can make about \$250 to \$300 a week, according to William Allen, manager of the paper's distribution center. Allen himself is a *Street News* success story, having gone from being homeless to being a salesperson to being a salaried office worker in six weeks. At the paper's West Forty-second Street storefront distribution center, he doles out newspapers, counts money, and provides a pep talk to incoming salespeople.

Not every salesperson is as successful as Allen. But with sales averaging around 13,000 per day, *Street News* is generating money. So far, at least a dozen of its salespeople have earned enough to rent a place to stay. As Robert Cooper said before setting back to the business of selling papers on the subway, "I've got a job. An apartment. I feel pretty good."

Steven Zausner

Zausner is a free-lance journalist and a graduate student at the Columbia University School of International Affairs.

REROUTED: Hawking *Street News*, its founders say, redirects energy spent in panhandling.



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CAPITAL LETTER

WADING AROUND IN THE PANAMA POOL

BY WILLIAM BOOT

From a layman's glossary of U.S. military terms:

PACIFICATION: *Subduing the enemy with artillery, mortar and rocket fire, napalm, and infantry assaults.*

PEACEKEEPER: *A ten-warhead thermonuclear missile.*

PROTECTIVE REACTION STRIKE: *An American bombing raid.*

TARGET SERVICING: *Blasting the enemy with artillery fire.*

WAR POOL: *A select group of combat journalists that is never permitted to see combat. Sometimes referred to as "the public's eyes and ears."*

Until last December's invasion of Panama, many journalists here in Washington only suspected that this last definition of war pool was the correct one. The pool had been established under Pentagon auspices after news media loudly protested being excluded from the 1983 Grenada invasion (one admiral actually went so far as to threaten to sink chartered press boats). Over the next several years, pools were called up on short notice and drilled during military maneuvers and in Persian Gulf convoys. Despite the preparations, many reporters hypothesized that the pool would never

really be allowed to cover a major combat operation due to military distrust of the press dating from Vietnam. But until Panama the hypothesis had never been tested.

For a few giddy hours on the evening of December 19 it appeared that the skepticism had been unjustified. The pool was quietly summoned to Andrews Air Force base and told to be equipped for action at an undisclosed, classified destination. Two hours after they were airborne in an Air Force C-141 transport plane, the fourteen reporters and camera people were briefed by their military handlers. The destination was Panama, as they had suspected. H-Hour was rapidly approaching and at long last they would be carrying out their mission — providing eyewitness coverage of Americans in action during the first hours of a surprise assault. Half a league onward!

Sad to say, the reporters' hopes soon were dashed. Theirs was not to cover war, they quickly learned — theirs was but to be ignored. By the time their plane touched down at Howard Air Force Base, the fighting was all but over. What's more, the military kept them bottled up for five hours in a building at the airbase as the last big firefights sputtered out. The reporters, clamoring for at least a briefing, were forced to rely on CNN. At last a briefer arrived — a U.S. embassy official who knew nothing about the military situation. He launched into a lecture on the history of Panama, from its founding in 1903.

Finally, at about ten that morning, the pool was lifted by helicopter to Fort Amador, where U.S. troops were in control, despite some occasional shooting. As pool member Fred Francis of NBC recalled in a memo written afterward: "Less than two miles away, the pool could clearly see the area around Noriega's headquarters in full blaze. Loudspeakers were blaring at Noriega loyalists to surrender. A tank was pounding away. We told our escorts that was where we needed to be. We were told, 'It is too dangerous.' That's like telling a reporter he can't cover a presidential race because it is too political or can't report on the Federal Reserve Board because it's too boring. Ironically, the "too dangerous" excuse had been used by top brass to brush off the press in Grenada and the pool was sup-

posed to prevent that from happening again.

According to Francis, NBC's Pentagon correspondent, and other pool members, the group was never taken to the scene of any real action until long after it was over. This led them to coin two mottoes: "Semper tardus" and "If it's news today, it's news to us." Francis says that in the first twenty-four hours the pool was repeatedly rebuffed when it asked to interview senior commanders, wounded GIs, or front-line troops. When reporters encountered a two-star general whose troops were deployed at the international airport, the officer said, "Sorry, my operational orders are that I cannot let you talk to any of my men. I can't speak with you."

Instead of being taken to cover combat stories, the pool was led on tours of deposed dictator Manuel Noriega's secret lairs: behold the cocaine, the firearms, the Hitler portrait. Then it was on to the next hideaway: skin magazines to the left of them, voodoo paraphernalia to the right of them (buckets of blood, chicken entrails) — into the valley of shame strode the fourteen. Grumbling that they were being used as propaganda to help the DOD justify Noriega's ouster, the pool members nonetheless dutifully filed stories on the tours, which they dubbed "Lifestyles of the Rich and Infamous."

William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.





Instead of being taken to cover combat stories, the pool was led on tours of Noriega's secret lairs

Eventually, on day two, Francis balked at yet another tour of a Noriega house and it was canceled.

(The defense department does have two reasons to grouse about members of the pool. First, *Time* magazine's deputy bureau chief, Laurence Barrett, acknowledged that several of his Washington staffers learned prematurely that the pool had been activated — the "hush-hush" call from the DOD and subsequent search for someone to join the pool came during an office dinner party. *Time* bureau chief Stanley Cloud says there was no breach of security, because staffers who learned of the pool call-up did not tell anyone else and because rumors of a move against Panama were already buzzing in Washington. Secondly, according to Francis, some pool members arrived at Andrews without their passports and without proper gear.)

Back at the Pentagon's public affairs office, the first reaction to the fate of the press pool was that someone had blundered. Chief spokesman Pete Williams said "incompetence" on the part of the U.S. Army in Panama had turned the first day of press coverage into a "disaster."

However, revisionism soon set in and by early January Pentagon spokesman Bob Taylor was telling *Editor & Publisher* that the pool had been "a big suc-

cess" despite having missed the war. When I asked him to elaborate, he said: "It did work . . . They filed fifty-some stories out of there." Vietnam had its body count; Panama had its story count. Pete Williams stressed in another interview that the pool had at least made it to Panama, which he suggested was a major accomplishment in itself, given the skepticism that it would ever be activated. This is rather like saying: the bad news is that your grandmother was dead on arrival; the good news is that the ambulance eventually did find the hospital. Listening to these justifications, I was somehow reminded of a scene from *Dr. Strangelove* in which the president expresses dismay that an unauthorized nuclear attack on Russia had just been launched and his Air Force chief replies: "Well, I don't think it's quite fair to condemn the entire program because of a single slip-up."

What caused the thwarting of the press pool? In considering this question, I referred to Graham Allison's famous book *Essence of Decision*, which provides three alternative "models" for explaining government conduct (his subject was the Cuban missile crisis).

First is the "Rational Actor" model, which assumes that government decisions result from sober, deliberate calculations. Applying this model, one can

argue that bottling up the pool was a deliberate military effort at spin control. Otto von Bismarck is reported to have said that "if you like laws and sausage, you should never watch either being made." U.S. military officers evidently think war victories, too, should be savored but not seen, at least not by the U.S. public and their "eyes and ears" in the media. Consequently, the Army in Panama saw to it that there were no independent, close-hand accounts of the assaults, bombings, and strafings that made the Panama victory possible — no televised pictures of dying Panamanian civilians and U.S. soldiers who paid the price for that victory. It is no secret that many U.S. military officers feel the United States was defeated in Southeast Asia not by Hanoi but by the news media, which not only criticized the war but sent back gruesome TV footage each day, souring the public on the war. The military's attitude in Grenada was "never again," and this was still the case in Panama, despite the DOD's lip service to the pool concept.

Allison's second analytical tool is the "Organizational Processes" model, which focuses on the power of bureaucracies, whose relentless routines often overwhelm individual policy-makers. "[A] government consists of a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own," he writes. "Government behavior can . . . be [understood] less as deliberate choices and more as outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior." Fred Francis is convinced that this bureaucratic explanation of the Panama fiasco has a good deal of validity, although he makes the point in less academic terms: "I don't believe it was deliberate. They just fucked up." Upon his return from Panama, Francis investigated the affair and found that, although the White House had decided on a Sunday to strike in Panama, the Pentagon p.r. office did not get the order to activate the pool until the following Tuesday, about twelve hours before the attack. The pool had not been made a part of the invasion plan. Pete Williams sent a message to Panama's Southern Command ordering the Army to accommodate the pool, but it was probably too late to alter bureaucratic routines that

were already well in motion or to affect the intention of Army officers to keep the press away from the fighting.

The "Governmental Politics" model, Allison's third, assumes that decisions result not from a single rational choice or bureaucratic inertia but from political struggles — "pulling and hauling" between government figures. To apply this model: it would have taken direct, active intervention by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell or President Bush to overcome Army resistance to the pool in Panama and alter the bureaucratic plans the military had begun to implement. Since that vigorous political support was not forthcoming, the pool scheme was destined to fail. Given Bush's penchant for government secrecy and his yearning to control the media, it's hard to imagine him ever plugging the pool idea with much energy. After all, the reporters might see something the Army did not want them to see. (After the December 21 "split-screen" incident in which he was shown joking about Panama while caskets of dead servicemen were juxtaposed on the screen, Bush actually asked the networks to in-

form the White House before using the split screen in his future appearances. Most networks refused.) To me, this explanation is the most persuasive.

Given the almost perverse mistreatment of the pool, it is ironical that the military's fear of negative reporting in Panama proved to be largely unfounded. Administration spokesmen easily dom-

complained that the Army was not there to protect them from Noriega's marauding "dignity battalions" and that they were in danger. Ironically, when those complaints were aired in Panama, it may actually have heightened the danger of reporters being kidnapped by reminding Panamanian troops that the Marriott was still vulnerable.) On the whole, news organs seemed to relish the plight of Noriega — the press needs villains, just as governments need enemies, and in the age of Cold War thaw a depraved dictator filled the bill rather well. CANNED PINEAPPLE, enthused the *New York Post* (January 5) after Noriega's surrender, appearing only a bit more gleeful than the mainstream papers (e.g. *The Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*, which ran his glum police mug shot prominently on their front pages, providing a kind of pictorial justification for "Operation Just Cause.") In short, it seems that Army officers in Panama were still fighting the last public relations war — Vietnam — while news organizations displayed a penchant for waving the flag and beating the drums. Welcome to the '90s. ◆

◆
**The pool coined
a motto:
"If it's news today,
it's news to us."**
◆

inated the television news and interview programs to put their spin on the operation, and relatively few critics were heard. News organizations did not hammer very hard against the justifications Bush offered for the invasion. (Some reporters did question the implementation of the purported goal of protecting American lives. Reporters holed up in the Marriott Hotel early in the operation

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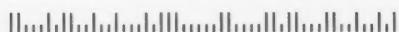
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DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **LAUREL** to the Tacoma, Washington, *Morning News Tribune*, for putting on the record the story of Seattle's Community Development Round Table and its off-the-record role in that city's power structure. Among the salient facts: (1) that for decades an exclusive group of business and professional leaders has been holding secret weekly meetings; (2) that not only do the organization's by-laws call for "strict adherence" to the "paramount" rule that those meetings be kept confidential, but they also require members "not to include CDRT in the list of organizations to which they belong"; and (3) that in addition to chief executive officers of corporations, utilities, real estate firms, and banks, members include the executive editors and the editorial page editors of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *The Seattle Times*, as well as the editorial director of Fisher Broadcasting's KOMO and the vice-president for news of CBS affiliate KIRO. In its front-page disclosure of the workings of the group, the Tacoma paper noted that, although Boeing chairman Frank Schronz was scheduled to talk at an upcoming meeting on the "inside story" of the strike then in progress against his company, no labor leaders had ever been asked to address, let alone join, the clandestine organization. The Community Development Round Table, incidentally, was founded in 1933 by the Chamber of Commerce and *The Seattle Times*.

◆ **DART** to the New York *Daily News*, for the ill-advised loan of its front page to the Chase Manhattan Bank. While most readers of the January 16 edition were learning from its page-one headline about the Campeau department stores' declaration of bankruptcy, others were getting the news BANKING MADE BETTER. Completing the page was a nine-by-seven-inch photo of a Chase Manhattan branch and this above-the-line teaser: CHASE INTRODUCES A WHOLE NEW WAY OF BANKING! SEE DETAILS ON PAGES MP 10 AND 11. Those who bothered to turn to Money Pages 10 and 11 found a two-page advertising spread. (The *News*'s gift to Chase is but the most recent in its series of similarly unfortunate promotional investments; CJR readers may recall an earlier Dart involving a page-one paean to a J.C. Penney store.)

◆ **LAUREL** to CBS, for refusing to relinquish control of its inflight newscasts to American Airlines, which, as a condition for renewing its six-year contract with the network, demanded the removal of all visual reports of plane crashes, airport bombings, terrorist attacks, and other "material detrimental to our public image." According to *Variety*, CBS's lofty position sent the airline flying off to CNN,

which appears to have experienced no disturbance over the editorial restrictions.

◆ **DART** to *The Commercial Appeal*, of Memphis, Tennessee, for Bush-league journalism. Throwing its full weight behind the controversial 1988 campaign theme of the Republican candidate for president, the paper last July inaugurated a five-month series on volunteerism, which it called "A Thousand Points of Light" — and which produced a pre-Thanksgiving visit from the president in honor of his program and the paper. Coverage of the ceremonies comprised some 518 column-inches of news and eight photos (not counting the four-page commemorative wraparound that completely obscured its November 22 front page), while the name of editor Lionel Linder, who hosted the event on the paper's front lawn, showed up in the reporting at least twenty-one times. Linder (last seen in this column being hoisted atop a billboard to promote the NFL) was also featured in a couple of photos with Bush. As the alternative *Memphis Flyer* put it in a strong editorial: "Think about it:



a newspaper being lauded by a politician for helping promote his political program. The very idea of such an arrangement goes against the grain of basic journalistic principles . . . We think volunteerism is a good thing. But *The Commercial Appeal's* recent coverage of this issue, frankly, made us ashamed for our profession."

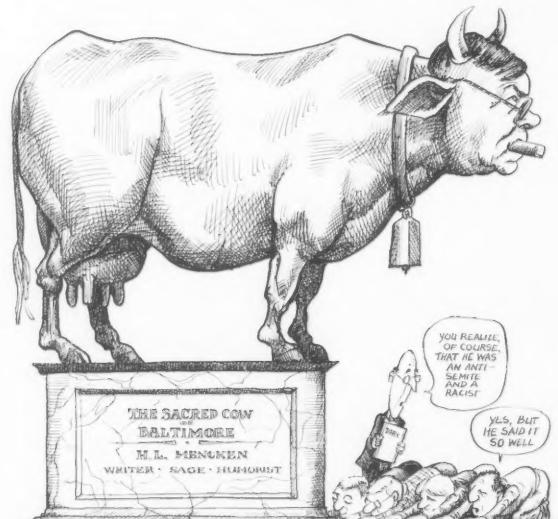
◆ **LAUREL** to the *Los Angeles Times* and staff writer David Shaw, for a scathing report on media abuse in California's notorious McMartin Pre-School molestation case. Timed for publication on the day the (not guilty) jury verdict in the record-breaking six-year trial was finally announced, Shaw's four-part series, three months in the making, drew on thousands of pages of official testimony, scores of interviews with prosecuting and defense attorneys, judges, parents, defendants, and journalists, and more than 2,000 local and national print and broadcast stories, paying particularly close attention to the role played by the *Los Angeles Times* itself. Unflinchingly, Shaw documents the early hysteria, the pack mentality, the cozy — and sometimes more than cozy — relationships between journalists and members of the prosecutors' team, the abandonment of skepticism, and the failure to report on anything that might have been favorable to the defense. As Shaw points out, there were some rare exceptions — notably, *American Lawyer* magazine and the Torrance, California, *Daily Breeze* — but his evidence shows that by and large the American media, including Shaw's own paper, were guilty of biased, unfair journalism, beyond a shadow of a doubt.

◆ **LAUREL** to KRON-TV, San Francisco, for "Toxins Around Us," a scary investigation into the sources and effects of the 1,055 pounds of unregulated poisonous chemicals that are legally released into the Bay Area's water, soil, and air every hour of every day. Based on reports filed by the polluters themselves under the Community Right to Know Act of 1986, the eight-part series moved from dump-sites operated by private industry and Uncle Sam to neighborhoods in which miscarriages, birth defects, and cancer are uncommonly common; it also included interviews with industry representatives (one of whom suggested that all those mephitic emissions were actually needed for good health). Augmenting the series was a free-on-request four-color "newsmap" detailing a wealth of useful information, from birth-defect clusters and smog hotspots to a listing of environmental organizations eager for public support.

◆ **DART** to WGAL-TV, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for coverage of a home-grown story that was less than complete. On its January 25 newscast, the NBC affiliate reported the *who, what, when, and where* of Keith Martin's resignation, effective immediately, from his nine-year job as anchor and managing editor of its six and eleven o'clock news — but it neglected to include the *why*. For that, viewers had to depend on the Lancaster *Intelligencer Journal*, which on the previous day had revealed that Martin had been named in a deposition filed in Lancaster county court by James H. Guerin, the head of the Lancaster-based International Signal and Control Corporation who is currently under federal in-

vestigation for alleged illegal deals with South Africa and for contract fraud: Guerin had testified that he had paid the anchorman some \$10,000 for his work as a media consultant. (WGAL officials, who later stated that they had forced Martin to resign because of the appearance of conflict of interest, denied that his moonlighting assignments had affected the station's coverage of Guerin's activities in any way.)

◆ **LAUREL** to Tim Giago, editor of the weekly *Lakota Times* in Rapid City, South Dakota, and winner of the 1985 H.L. Mencken Award, for his unequivocating response to the racist attitudes and anti-Semitism revealed in the Sage of Baltimore's recently published diaries. While most members of the journalistic booboisie tortuously rationalized the unwelcome news (the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, for instance, which sponsors the Mencken award, concluded in an editorial, "We must remember that he was never



honored so much for what he said as the way he said it"; fellow Baltimorean Russell Baker observed in an astonishing column that it "would have been astonishing" to have been without such prejudices "in Mencken's time and place"); and while the National Press Club debated, and finally rejected (in a 7-4 vote), a motion to find a more honorable name for its Mencken Library and Reference Center, Giago simply packed up his award and sent it back to the *Sun*. "To keep it would fly in the face of everything I have fought for," the Native American editor wrote, "and it would bring disgrace upon the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation, those wonderful people in whose name I accepted it." The H.L. Mencken Award, it should be noted, has been given annually since 1981, in recognition of "the rare contemporary columnist who shares his spirit." ◆

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be directed.

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CJR

APRIL 1990

THE MEDIA'S ONE AND ONLY FREEDOM STORY

A remarkable upwelling
of democratic spirit occurred
simultaneously on two continents.
Can you name the second one?

BY LAWRENCE WESCHLER

Newsweek's issue dated December 25, 1989 (on the stands December 18) provided a fairly outrageous instance, but it was by no means untypical. The cover displayed an awesome throng of peaceful demonstrators facing, in the foreground, a looming statue of a suddenly irrelevant Vladimir Lenin. (As it happened, this particular throng had gathered

In our study of print and TV coverage, we found that *Newsweek*, for example, devoted ninety pages to Eastern Europe; the total for both Chile and Brazil didn't amount to even a single page

Wide World



earlier in the year for a pretty spooky nationalist demonstration in Baku, Azerbaijan — but that's another story.) "People of the Year," trumpeted *Newsweek*'s cover line, with, as subhead, "Standing up for Freedom," and, boxed above the masthead, "1989: Changing the Course of History." Inside, a special report went on for twenty-one graphically striking pages, with images and anecdotes gleaned from the recent experiences of China, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary. Nowhere in its special report or anywhere else in that week's issue did *Newsweek*'s editors see fit even to mention the week's other remarkable upwelling of democratic spirit, the hard-won standups-for-freedom that occurred in Chile on December 14 and in Brazil on December 17 when voters in the two countries celebrated their first free presidential elections in sixteen and twenty-five years respectively: the first free presidential elections, that is, since U.S.-inspired military coups overturned the democratically elected governments of Brazil's João Goulart in 1964 and Chile's Salvador Allende in 1973.

As someone who has covered developments in both Eastern Europe and Latin America over the past decade, let me begin by emphasizing that in no way would I wish to downplay the significance of the astonishing events taking place these days in the communist world. They are indeed momentous and deserve all the coverage they get. My point is rather that our media's failure adequately to cover developments such as the recent campaigns in Chile and Brazil badly skews our understanding of what is happening in the world in general and in Eastern Europe in particular. This is true not only retrospectively — Eastern Europe is not the only place in the world these days trying to struggle out from under decades of often violent and terribly constricting superpower domination — but also prospectively: the sorts of economic dilemmas Eastern Europeans seem likely to face in the decades ahead as they attempt the transition to a wide-open free market — an acute polarization of wealth, the inescapable consequences of their crushing national debts, the surrender of their national sovereignty over key

economic decisions to such monitoring agencies as the International Monetary Fund — are precisely the sort that Latin Americans have been struggling with for several decades. Indeed, these two sets of concerns — what to do about the past, and how to address the future — were very much in the forefront of the campaigns in both Chile and Brazil the past several months, though, again, they went largely unreported in the American media.

Before I go on, I should perhaps try to quantify the phenomenon whose existence I am alleging. With the assistance of Dan Sheridan, an intern working here in CJR's offices, I have attempted several impressionistic cross-sections of U.S. media coverage of the worldwide democratic upwelling during November and December — as reflected in *Newsweek* and *Time*; in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*; and on the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC. We chose to focus on a comparison of the coverage of Eastern Europe (including Lithuania) on the one hand, and Chile and Brazil on the other. In this admittedly unscientific survey, we were thus focusing on two simultaneous experiences of the continuing transition from totalitarian to democratic modes of governance in which, in both cases, a discussion of the virtues and pitfalls of an unrestricted free market was very much to the fore.

In the case of the two newsweeklies, we chose to study the nine issues from November 6, 1989, through January 1, 1990. *Newsweek*, for example, ran a total of ninety pages on Eastern Europe during this period (an exceptionally fascinating one, to be sure, with major transitions occurring, successively, in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania). The total coverage of both Chile and Brazil, meanwhile, didn't amount to even a single entire page. In the November 13 issue, as its only coverage of the upcoming November 15 presidential primary in Brazil, *Newsweek* chose to devote most of its one-fifth of a page item to the farcically short-lived entry of TV-variety show host Silvio Santos into the race (ah, those wacky Latinos). There was no coverage, the following week, of the outcome of the primary — a decidedly interesting outcome, since the two candidates who emerged were a charismatic millionaire center-right populist named Fernando Collor de Mello and an equally charismatic, strongly leftist

Lawrence Weschler is a staff reporter for *The New Yorker*, for which he has recently reported on Poland. His book *A Miracle, A Universe: Settling Accounts with Torturers*, derived from earlier reporting on Uruguay and Brazil, will be published this spring.



Alexis Díaz/Gamma Liaison

labor-activist, Luís Inácio da Silva, commonly known as "Lula," so that the ensuing campaign was definitely going to offer Brazilians a choice. Nor did *Newsweek* subsequently cover the month-long campaign leading up to the run-off. Nor, for that matter, did it offer even a glimmer as to the outcome of that final vote. (Despite an exciting last-minute surge, and partly because the military was beginning to eye developments with increasingly evident alarm, Lula eventually lost out to Collor.)

For its part, the Chilean presidential contest, in which Patricio Aylwin led a coalition of one-time enemies — Christian Democrats and Socialists — in a triumphant campaign against General Pinochet's handpicked successor, showed up in *Newsweek* only once during these weeks, in a half-page item in the December 18 issue. (The same issue included an article titled "Double Standard," but the double standard in question turned out to involve a comparison between the Soviet Union's attitudes toward changes in Eastern Europe and its attitudes toward changes within its own borders.) In fairness, there was one quite good single-page piece in the November 6 issue, titled "Perestroika Down Under," which offered insights into the movement toward greater public and economic openness in Latin America, considered within the context of developments in Eastern Europe. So that, generously tabulated, one might say that *Newsweek's* ratio during those nine weeks came in at 90 to 1.7.

Time did somewhat better. Eastern European coverage during the same period netted a total of 98 pages. Meanwhile, the magazine's November 13 issue offered a quarter page on the upcoming Brazilian primary, again focusing on the farcical Mr. Santos. On November 27, *Time* devoted a fifth of a page to the outcome of the primary, offering the names of the final contenders. On December 25, Chile's election received a fifth of a page, and a week later a full page was devoted to the challenges facing Brazil's president-elect. Additionally, during this period *Time* devoted two pages to an interview with Venezuela's president, Carlos Andres Perez, who, according to the subhead, saw "the third world as a revolution in the making unless richer nations come to the rescue" (November 27), and three unusually good pages to a general overview of Latin America's seemingly intractable and increasingly dangerous polarization of wealth (November 6). So that, again generously

Last December 10, in Wenceslas Square in Prague (far left), thousands gathered to listen to Vaclav Havel, who would soon become president of a newly democratic Czechoslovakia.

On the same day in Santiago (left), more than one million people gathered to hear Patricio Aylwin, who four days later would be elected president of a newly democratic Chile.

tabulated, *Time* came in with a ratio of 98 to 6.65 — the best, actually, among any of the media surveyed.

In considering the daily media (print and television), we chose to examine a somewhat different cross-section — focusing on the two-week period of December 7 through 21 that bracketed the Chilean and Brazilian elections. These were eventful weeks in Eastern Europe, though perhaps a bit less so than the weeks immediately preceding or following this period. In East Germany, for example, things seemed to be falling away from the climactic days of the previous month (Egon Krenz had resigned on December 6); in Czechoslovakia, Prime Minister Adamec resigned on December 7 and, three days later, under the threat of a renewed strike, the communists acceded to the creation of a new cabinet in which they formed the minority (Vaclav Havel would not be named president until immediately after this period); in Bulgaria, crowds and communists regularly sparred over the appropriate rate of democratization. Toward the end of these two weeks, the massacre in Timisoara, Romania, signaled the beginning of that country's passionate crisis which, again, only culminated immediately afterward; the IMF was continuing its crunch negotiations with Poland over its coming crash transition to a free market; on December 14 Andrei Sakharov died, and he was buried on the eighteenth. Meanwhile, as we have noted, the Chilean election occurred on December 14, and the Brazilian on December 17.

With both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, we tabulated the number of individual articles devoted to each region, along with the total column-inches of coverage. Thus, in the *Times*, for example, during those two weeks, Eastern Europe received more than 3,300 column-inches of coverage across 173 articles, while Chile and Brazil received only 261 inches of attention in 15 articles (this includes one on the reaction of Brazilians of German descent to the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and another about the uproar caused by a pro-Nazi publishing house in São Paulo). The *Post's* ratio was roughly similar — almost 2,300 column-inches in 104 articles on Eastern Europe as against 177 column-inches in 8 articles on Brazil and Chile. To spot check another aspect of coverage, we looked at the op-ed pages of the *Los Angeles Times* during the same two

While not a single news account referred to any U.S. involvement in the Chilean coup, hardly a single piece about Hungary or Czechoslovakia failed to mention the Soviet Union's interventions in those countries

weeks and were hardly surprised to find 20 pieces on Eastern Europe, 2 on Chile, and none on Brazil.

Tabulating the coverage afforded by the evening television newscasts was somewhat easier, since we decided to dispense with a time count of the innumerable Eastern European stories and limited ourselves to the coverage of the Chilean and Brazilian elections — which proved to be virtually nonexistent. According to "run-downs" provided by the three networks, during the two-week period NBC mentioned Chile once, for 32 seconds on December 15, and Brazil was alluded to for 16 seconds on December 17 and another 16 seconds on December 18 — for a grand total of just over one minute's air time, with no reports whatsoever from the field. (Bulgaria by itself rated more than two minutes' total coverage on NBC during the same period.) ABC's coverage was about the same: 15 seconds on Chile on December 14 and 45 seconds on Brazil on December 17, with no on-site coverage. (*Nightline* did not cover either election.) CBS's coverage was much worse. Dan Rather never so much as mentioned the presidential elections in Brazil, the world's sixth most populous nation. Chile's existence was briefly acknowledged once, with an item on the December 15 program — but this solitary reference aired only on that evening's initial broadcast and was bumped from the West Coast edition. (During the same period CBS managed to squeeze in three reports from Bulgaria, two of them with on-scene correspondents.)

Bulgaria has a population of nine million, Brazil a population of 150 million. Brazil and Chile together have populations of more than 160 million, while the population of all the countries of Eastern Europe combined is only 140 million.

Admittedly, population by itself is not a criterion for newsworthiness, and, as I've already indicated, the events in Eastern Europe (especially as they reflected parallel transformations in the Soviet Union) were of epochal importance. The year 1989 indeed saw "history changing course" — but it was changing course on both continents. More to the point, in both Brazil and Chile the course that history was changing from had been set a generation ago through extreme U.S. interference in the internal affairs of the two countries. The 1964 Brazilian coup has received extensive

UPI/Bettmann



scholarly and popular treatment in the years since (a particularly engrossing source is A.J. Langguth's *Hidden Terrors*). U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon and his military attaché, Vernon Walters, were in continuous contact with the plotters, and Ambassador Gordon subsequently characterized the overthrow of President Goulart's democratically affirmed government as "a great moment in the history of civilization."

According to a report subsequently issued by the archdiocese of São Paulo, the ensuing military regimes "ushered in the most repressive and violent period since Brazil had become a republic" — one from which it took decades for Brazil's civil society to extricate itself. But nowhere in any of the news accounts we surveyed was even a hint of the U.S. role in this history provided. This is not to say that historical background was always lacking; it's just that it was always cropped.

Consider, within the Chilean context, Shirley Christian's boilerplate historical overview in her piece on the election's results in the *Times* of December 15. "The last Chilean president chosen at the polls was Salvador Allende Gossens, a socialist narrowly elected in September 1970 Three years later, on September 11, 1973, with the country in economic chaos as the result of strikes, inflation, property confiscation, and shortages, the armed forces took power with broad public support. Dr. Allende died during the coup."

Conspicuously absent from this account is any reference to Henry Kissinger's famous dictum that the U.S. shouldn't have "to stand idly by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people," or his subsequent pledge to make the Chilean economy "scream," or even a suggestion of the myriad ways in which the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council proceeded to do just that, while simultaneously coordinating their actions with the Chilean military's burgeoning conspirators (all matters which were conclusively documented during the U.S. Senate's Church Committee's hearings in 1975-76 and further elaborated in Seymour Hersh's *The Price of Power*). But although egregious, Christian's potted history was by no means unique — indeed, again, not a single news account we surveyed referred to any U.S. involvement in the Chilean coup. By way of con-



The New York Times

A Czechoslovak youth climbs aboard a tank in Prague (far left) as the Soviet Union crushed the government there in 1968. Salvador Allende Gossens and his guards (left) look for a place to set up a defense, shortly before his death during the U.S.-backed coup that crushed the Chilean government in 1973.

trast, hardly a single piece we studied dealing with Hungary or Czechoslovakia failed to refer to the Soviet Union's intervention in those countries in 1956 and 1968. (A recurrent trope in this reporting involved the way in which the Soviet-installed dictators invariably cropped out the images of their once-prominent predecessors from any and all prior photographic documentation, thus proving their maniacal self-absorption. This was a trope whose domestic application seemed lost on the editors who so regularly deployed it.)

What's at issue here is not simply a question of double standards. Rather, the point is that what's going on in Eastern Europe is truly incomprehensible without an understanding of the current plight of Latin America. That's because Eastern Europe now stands on the verge of being subsumed into the world capitalist system. And in the same way that, as Eastern Europeans correctly insist, one should always consider the operations of "real existing socialism" as opposed to some fantasized version of same, so one must try to consider the operations of "real existing capitalism." Real capitalism, as a world system, is not just West Germany and Sweden and Japan and the boutiques along Madison Avenue; it's also Brazil and Mexico and the Philippines and the homeless along Madison Avenue. The latter, it can be argued, make the former possible. I'm not saying this out of some sort of ideological petulance but rather because Poland, for example, has to understand (and we have to understand about Poland) what international capitalism has in mind for it, which is not that it becomes Sweden but rather that it serves as a sort of Mexico for the emerging post-1992 European powerhouse — a source of cheap labor, a threat that West European managers will be able to bring to bear on their own workforces should they get too uppity: "If you don't curb those wage demands, remember, we can always pick up and move to Poland." (Just as, should Polish workers start getting too uppity, they'll be told the owners can always pick up and move to Romania, or to the Philippines.) Now, some Poles, perhaps even many Poles, do stand to do quite well for themselves under the new dispensation, but many others will fall by the wayside. That's because Poland is basically a third world country and, up to now anyway, that's how capitalism has

operated in third world countries. In fact, that's in large part what Brazil's election was all about — or what Lula tried to make it be about.

Because of the failure of the American news media (especially television) to embrace stories from both continents simultaneously, American news consumers were given a fundamentally distorted sense of what is currently at stake in Eastern Europe. Take, for example, another frequently used trope — the spectacle of East German day-trippers gazing longingly at the luxury motorcycle (or some similar luxury fill-in-the-blank) in the display window of some West Berlin emporium. The subtext of that picture is that this is what capitalism has to offer — this is what the East Germans could have had all along if they'd only been West Germans, and this is what they can soon expect to have. And, of course, this is completely delusional. Most West Germans cannot afford that motorcycle (certainly most of the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* whose jobs the East Germans will be offered, at least at the outset, cannot afford that motorcycle). And the overwhelming majority of people living under world capitalism cannot afford that motorcycle — only a minuscule proportion of Brazilians, for example, can. And, again, that was part of what the Brazilian election was about.

Over and over again, for example, Lula tried to raise the question of what the first world was doing to the third. In a standard speech, he took a core axiom of the generals' doctrine of national security — the one to the effect that a third world war had already started, between the forces of godless communism and those of Christian liberty — and turned it inside out: "I will tell you that the third world war has already started," he declared, "a silent war, not for that reason any less sinister. This war is tearing down Brazil, Latin America, and practically all the third world. Instead of soldiers dying, there are children; instead of millions of wounded there are millions of unemployed; instead of the destruction of bridges there is the tearing down of factories, schools, hospitals, and entire economies . . . It is a war over the foreign debt, one which has as its main weapon interest, a weapon more deadly than the atom bomb."

Collor appropriated some of Lula's vehemence, likewise insisting that he would stand up to the foreign banks.

Lech Walesa's 1989 visit to America received extensive coverage in the U.S. press, whereas a similar trip made a few months earlier by his colorful Brazilian counterpart passed unnoticed

In the end, however, he seemed to argue that Lula's was no way to approach life in the real world, that socialist experiments had failed everywhere they had been tried, and that free enterprise could still be made to work for a majority of Brazilians. Theirs was, at any rate, a real argument, for real stakes. (I will leave for another day — or perhaps another researcher — a comparison of the remarkably contemporaneous careers of the Brazilian steelworker and labor leader Lula and his Polish counterpart, the shipworker-activist Lech Walesa — and of how those two equally fascinating careers were covered by the American media. One place of access into the subject might be to quantify the American media's coverage of Lech Walesa's November 1989 visit to America as against its coverage of a similar trip made a few months earlier by Lula — a man who would subsequently come within a few percentage points of becoming the next president of the vastest country in Latin America. Final tabulation of the ratio between these two coverages might founder on the mathematical difficulty of conceiving a ratio one of whose terms is zero.)

During the debates that preceded Poland's adoption of its current action plan, Bolivia was much on people's minds — in Poland, if not in the U.S. That's because Jeffrey Sachs, the Harvard economist who arrived in Warsaw as an adviser to Solidarity's parliamentary delegation, came advertised as the man who had recently helped stem Bolivia's desperate hyperinflation, virtually overnight, through the introduction of a radical action plan similar in many aspects to the one he was proposing for Poland — the immediate elimination of most subsidies, the creation of a stable currency at a unified rate, the ruthless maintenance of a balanced budget, an overnight leap into a wide-open free market.

Poles spent a lot of time wondering whether the leap was too much to ask of them, and a lot of time arguing about whether their situation was anything like Bolivia's. In the end, Solidarity's delegates voted to leap, but they can't have been much heartened by news that came out of Bolivia this past November to the effect that, owing to the growing labor unrest occasioned by the effects of the country's calamitous shock transition, Bolivia's center-left government had found it necessary to impose a state of siege and arrest thousands of hunger-striking unionists. When

Reuters/Bettmann



someone showed a brief *New York Times* item about the Bolivian state of siege to a high Solidarity official who happened to be visiting the U.S. at the time, the man winced and then asked if he could keep the clipping. "I need to show it to Prime Minister Mazowiecki," he chuckled glumly, "so that he'll know what to do when we get to that stage of the plan." He grasped the connection, even if the U.S. media didn't. (In fairness, Jeffrey Sachs subsequently insisted that the situations of Bolivia and Poland are entirely different, that Poland has many more resources and a much better chance to make the leap work than desperately impoverished and unlucky Bolivia ever did, and that all he had ever promised the Bolivians was that he could cure their hyperinflation, not their underlying poverty and ill luck.)

But those are the sorts of connections that could have and should have been made by the American media — particularly editors and news directors — these past several months. And I don't want to make it sound as if they should have done so because, even though vaguely distasteful, such stories were nutritious and would have been good for us. On the contrary, the colorful and boisterous resurgence of democracy in Chile and Brazil ought to have been a sheer delight to cover — and to convey. Imagine what it would have been like had the anchors all headed off to Latin America for the week beginning December 11 (and what better week to have done so?): Monday and Tuesday in Santiago (Peter Jennings with the towering Andes serving as backdrop), Wednesday and Thursday in Rio (Tom Brokaw in shirtsleeves on Ipanema beach), concluding Friday with a report from the much-discussed, deliriously photogenic Amazon (Dan Rather, in a safari jacket, floating gently toward the delta in a canoe). The Chilean and Brazilian electoral campaigns regularly produced rallies and celebrations featuring hundreds of thousands of participants, events every bit as tele-captivating as anything in Wenceslas Square.

The final days of the Brazilian campaign were fraught with moments of high drama — Lula surging in the polls thanks to his masterly performance in the first televised debate; Collor responding by producing Lula's first wife, who accuses him of having originally wanted to abort their now fifteen-year-old daughter; Lula's people retaliating the next day, accusing Collor of having paid the woman 200,000 crusados (the equivalent of \$10,000) to make the statement; Lula and the daughter in question appearing on camera that



Claudia Meyer/Black Star

Lech Walesa and U.S. Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher play cowboy in Washington (far left). Luis Inacio da Silva, known as "Lula," works the campaign trail in Brazil (left). Both men came out of the labor movement, led key strikes, helped found workers' parties, and struggled against totalitarian governments.

evening in an ostentatious display of filial devotion; a clearly flustered Lula nevertheless botching his performance in the next and final debate. Forget about the anchors: if only the networks had been willing to spring for the price of a few Apex fares to send a crew down to cover the campaigns' final week. Imagine the sound bites they could have netted!

When I discussed some of these fantasies with a senior producer at one of the networks, he commented, not for attribution, that one reason the networks couldn't afford to send a correspondent to South America was that they had already spent so much money dispatching the anchors and their vast entourages to places like Berlin and Prague and Rome and Tokyo and Malta . . . (Only one of the five producers I spoke with was willing to be quoted by name. All of them said they agreed with my basic premises and regarded their network's failure to cover the Brazilian and Chilean elections at any further depth as scandalous; all of them assured me that I was performing a really valuable service in compiling this piece; none of them thought it would do any good.)

One of the producers explained that there was "just too much news going on this fall," that it was all "a question of triage." His operation had neither the resources nor the time to cover everything, and some things had just had to go. I asked whether, if a giant volcano had erupted in the middle of the Amazon, spewing spectacular geysers of lava miles into the air, his network would have sent a crew down and found the time in its newscast. He was silent for a moment and then sighed. "Yeah," he said, "of course we would have." A colleague was not so sentimental. "Naah," he said knowingly. "We would only have sent the crew down if the plume of ash was actually falling on Miami."

"It would have depended on whether there was severe loss of life," Tom Bettag, executive producer of *The CBS Evening News*, told me. "If there were lots of human suffering, we probably would have sent a crew down."

But there is lots of human suffering, I pointed out — the debt, for example, is exacting an incredible amount of human suffering.

"I know," Bettag said. "But the thing is, with a short-form broadcast like ours, you can't show the deaths caused by the debt. The volcano wasn't there yesterday and is there

today — that's new, that's television news. But with a low-level simmering sort of issue like the debt, it just doesn't work. People the next morning say, 'Gee, did you see the footage of that volcano last night on the news?' But nobody gets up in the morning and says, 'Gee, did you hear about that debt in Brazil?'"

Earlier he had alluded to the ongoing battle in network television over international reporting, which costs a great deal of money to produce and many network executives disparage as a ratings killer. "But," he continued, "we feel that to talk that way is absolutely irresponsible. If there is one thing about the twenty-first century, it's that it will be a time of international competition, and the successful nation is going to be the one that knows its competition and knows the world. For those of us in network news, it's an awesome burden. And not to be self-serving, but I think we put on more international news than any other network. We've dragged the others into it."

When asked why, given all that, CBS didn't send any correspondents down to cover the elections and didn't so much as mention the Brazilian vote, Bettag began by pleading the time factor. "We can't cover everything," he said. "And we aren't effective when we try to cover every story just a little bit. You need to build a base of understanding in your viewership, one that over a period of weeks gets them to understand why an issue or a place is important to their lives, so that they don't just get up and go get a beer when the foreign news comes on. That's one of the things we try to do in sending the anchor abroad, like when we sent Dan to Tokyo in the middle of last year. You do it through a series of reports: you lay the base, and then you build on it. Now, I know Brazil and Chile were important — but so were a lot of other places, especially those weeks. Sure, for my own peace of mind, I could have arranged for a single minute-forty-five-second piece, but it wouldn't have done any good, not without the foundation having been laid in advance."

So instead CBS reported nothing.

"The Latin American story really calls for depth," Bettag now took to musing. "I think our best chance down the road would be to take the anchor down to Brazil and really go into things in depth."

That sounded novel and exciting, something to look forward to. ♦

OPEN SECRETS

What the government seeks to conceal the National Security Archive works hard to put on the record

BY SAMUEL FROMARTZ

In the last days of President Reagan's term in office, the nonprofit National Security Archive got a tip that the White House was about to delete thousands of electronic messages on the White House computers — the same back-channel system Oliver North used to communicate with top administration officials during the Iran-contra affair. Concerned about the loss of valuable White House records, the archive filed suit against Reagan to prevent the destruction of the documents. At 6:10 on the eve of George Bush's inauguration, a federal judge issued a temporary injunction to prevent the records from being destroyed, beginning what has become a year-old suit to preserve the data.

The suit was just one of many the now nearly five-year-old archive has filed in its aggressive campaign to make classified information about government affairs available for the public record. Its aim has been to preserve what founder Scott Armstrong calls "institutional memory" — the layers of public and private documents that make up national security policy — in order to hold officials accountable for their words and actions. Having obtained documents through the Freedom of Information Act and through donations from researchers, the archive has become a repository for

a vast amount of once-secret government material available to anyone who wants to see it. The archive has put itself squarely on the map as a crucial source of information when it comes to the record of government conduct.

Thanks to its unique collection of contemporary national security documents on Iran and Central America, the archive achieved celebrity almost as soon as it opened its doors. Its day-by-day account of the Iran-contra affair from its inception in 1980 until April 1987, published the day congressional hearings began, became a 678-page bible for national security reporters and congressional staffers. Even independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh requested a copy in electronic form into which classified information could be inserted for his record of the affair. Its resources will undoubtedly be tapped during the upcoming trial of former National Security Adviser John Poindexter.

After expanding quickly, the archive went through a period of turmoil last year. Its plan to publish its collection of government documents fell behind schedule, contributing to conflicts between the archive and the Fund for Peace. From the beginning the fund has served as the archive's tax-exempt sponsor and financial administrator, an arrangement that allows the archive to receive foundation funds. The difficulties also caused concern at the Ford Foundation, which had made a substantial loan to the organization.

Samuel Fromartz, who lives in New York City, writes frequently about business-related subjects.

Last summer, after months of internal fighting, the executive committee of the Fund for Peace moved to place Armstrong — a former *Washington Post* investigative reporter who started the group with \$20,000 of his own money — on administrative leave. This prompted the staff to threaten a walkout. Armstrong then stepped down from day-to-day management and by January he had become a visiting professor of international journalism at American University. The archive worked up a new budget, cutting three members from its roughly forty-member staff and designating four more positions as possibly expendable. A search for a new executive director was initiated.

Armstrong, who says he never wanted to be a manager, concedes that a more business-minded person was needed to run the archive; at the same time, he believes that concern about the archive's highlighting of dishonest statements by Reagan administration officials was the underlying cause of his troubles.

Early on, Armstrong says, Ford Foundation officials told him they were upset by some of the free-lance pieces that staff members, making use of the extraordinary material available at the archive, had written on controversial topics like Central America and the Iran-contra affair. He says the Ford people feared that columns by authors identified as archive employees would compromise the group's avowed nonpartisan stance if they criticized officials and pointed out inconsistencies or lies in their public statements.

"At one point after I appeared on *MacNeil/Lehrer*," Armstrong recalls, "I got a call from Stan Heginbotham [of the Ford Foundation's international affairs program], who said, 'What were you doing, calling George Bush a liar?'"

"I said, 'I'm not calling Bush a liar; it's just that what he says is not what the documents say.'

"Well, then you're calling Bush a liar, and during a presidential campaign that's a partisan position." So I said, "It's only partisan if you say you don't think liars should be president. I didn't say that." (Ford Foundation officials, as a matter of policy, declined to discuss matters concerning the archive other than its funding. The foundation's vice-

president, Susan Berresford, pointed out that Ford has provided the archive with more than \$800,000 in grants, in addition to the \$1.5 million loan. "Our actions speak for themselves," she said.)

The archive, in consultation with the Ford Foundation, drew up a policy statement that emphasized the need for disclaimers when staff members published their own work. But Armstrong contends that the foundation's criticisms were part of an effort to temper the archive's vehement public opposition to government lying and dissembling. "It will be the end of the archive with a voice," he says. "It will be turned into a scholarly library — the *Sewanee Review* of nonprofit organizations."

Others connected with the group say that the conflict with the Ford Foundation was a comparatively minor issue — even a nonissue — and that the turmoil simply reflected the growing pains of a major nonprofit organization beset by funding pressures, missed publishing deadlines, and Armstrong's inability to manage its affairs. Joseph Onek, the co-chairman of the archive's board and former general counsel, says that the Ford Foundation was well aware of the archive's adversarial role in the past and was comfortable with it. "At Scott's request, I raised those concerns with Ford at the highest level and it was clear that was not a problem they were concerned about." Nina Solarz, executive director of the Fund for Peace, says, similarly, that she had no problem with the archive's attacks on official lies; her concern, she says, was focused solely on management problems.

What the archive was attempting to achieve was "a fairly natural transition from a founder to a manager," says deputy director Tom Blanton. "But it's taken longer than people wanted. It's been complicated and it's been fraught with a lot of conflict."

The National Security Archive is housed in the Brookings Institution building near Dupont Circle in Washington. File cabinets, worn furniture, computers, and bookshelves dominate the fifth-floor space, which is crowded with staff members, most of whom are in their twenties or thirties. Declassified U.S. documents

are everywhere — overflowing from drawers, piled on desks, stacked on bookshelves, and carefully catalogued in a mini-mainframe computer.

A transcript of a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing is stuck up on the wall above the photocopy machine, just one page out of 45,000 formerly secret government documents housed at the archive in a collection that's increasing at the rate of 1,200 to 1,500 a month. The archive collects newspaper clips, press briefings, court records, phone logs, computer messages, bank records, airgrams, cables, flight logs — virtually anything that constitutes a record of government policy and action.

Armstrong has a rare grasp of the workings of government, having honed

wanted to ask" — and Armstrong soon amassed a huge number of documents relating to U.S.-Soviet relations, the Middle East, and Central America.

Agency officials, of course, had censored many sections of many of these documents. When Armstrong sat down to compare his set of documents on Central America with those gathered by former *New York Times* reporter Raymond Bonner, the two men found that different chunks of the same documents had been blacked out. By combining their different versions, they were able to create a more complete record of U.S. foreign policy in Central America. It was this discovery that convinced Armstrong of the need for a repository for declassified government documents.

CJR/Trina Sobotka



Archive founder Scott Armstrong amid boxes of declassified documents

The archive was a key resource during the Iran-contra hearings — and undoubtedly will be again during the trial of John Poindexter

his skills as senior investigator on the Senate Watergate Committee before joining *The Washington Post* in 1976. He co-authored the best-seller about the Supreme Court, *The Brethren*, with the Post's Bob Woodward and left the paper in 1985 to work on a book about U.S. foreign policy.

It was during his years at the Post that Armstrong, frustrated by the canned statements and managed news of the Reagan era, began to build a career around the Freedom of Information Act. The FOIA was the route to the story behind the story — "the only way you could get to ask the questions you really

While the archive's usefulness helped it attract initial funding from organizations like the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Armstrong was aware that the archive couldn't provide its services indefinitely without a more dependable, long-term source of income. He worked out a plan with the Ford Foundation to design numerous "document sets," consisting of indexes and microfiche copies of documents, that could be sold to libraries around the world. The sets were organized around specific topics, like El Salvador and Iran-contra.

In 1988, after an agreement had been drawn up with the publishing firm Chadwyck-Healey, the archive received a \$1.5 million low-interest loan from the Ford Foundation's program-related investments office. The conduit for the Ford money was the Fund for Peace, which signed for the loan. The revenue from the publishing activity was intended to replace grant funds as the archive sought to achieve self-sufficiency by the mid-1990s.

"Here was an opportunity to have a locker full of frozen events and offer them to libraries — to make the market economy work for a nonprofit foundation," Armstrong explained recently.

The plan was ambitious. The first set of indexed documents was due out in March 1989, with two more scheduled for release that year and seven each year from 1990 on. The cataloguing and indexing effort would be "equivalent to that of the largest research libraries," according to the archive's business plan.

The first document set was published nine months behind schedule. By mid-year of 1989, the archive's failure to meet its publishing schedule became the focus of discussions between the archive, the Fund for Peace, and the Ford Foundation. When Joshua Reichert took over as interim executive director in October, he thought the operation could go broke in a matter of months. The budget was slashed, a massive fund-raising effort was undertaken, and the publishing plan scaled back to produce four document sets by June 1990 and another four by the following June. The goal of self-sufficiency was put off until the end of the 1990s. The board also decided eventually to become independent of the Fund for Peace.

The process of gathering the documents and putting them together is painstaking and labor-intensive. As a result of the government's arbitrary declassification decisions, staff members are in some instances compelled to compare three versions of the same document to obtain the full record — including the scrawls and initials in the margins that can provide some sense of an official's thinking.

Analysts and indexers pour over every cable, briefing paper, and memo re-

leased by the government, gathering names, dates, and locations, seeking cross-references to other documents, trying to place each bit of information into the larger picture of foreign policy. Each document is scanned by three sets of eyes and eventually entered into the mini-mainframe that serves as the archive's electronic index. The pay-off of all this labor can make headlines.

During the Oliver North trial, for instance, the government objected to releasing documents that identified by name a Costa Rican intelligence official with close ties to the United States. The debate over how much of the document could be released stalled and nearly derailed the trial.

"A reporter called us during the afternoon break and asked what we knew about this guy," recalls Blanton, the archive's deputy director. "So we go to the data base and we see three different versions of the same document — two versions released by the Iran-contra committee and a third in a civil lawsuit." That evening the archive released the uncensored document to major newspapers, showing that the government had been trying to protect a secret that had already been released.

"It shows how arbitrary the government is, and the total lack of reality in the argument that these were national security secrets," says Peter Kornbluh, a senior analyst at the archive who specializes in Central America.

Another example: in 1988, the archive won a court case it had brought to obtain classified documents about the Cuban missile crisis. A 300-page stack of material from the National Security Council arrived at the archive in January 1989, one week before a conference that would bring together top policymakers of the era was to begin in Moscow.

The documents, seen only by the twelve most senior members of the Kennedy administration, detailed a plan to overthrow Castro more than a year after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. As it happened, this second attempt was tentatively scheduled for October 1962, the month the Kremlin tried to deploy nuclear missiles on the island. The documents appeared to support the Soviets' long-held contention that they had acted because they feared the U.S. was ready to invade Cuba.

Armstrong and Laurence Chang, who coordinates the archive's Cuban Missile Crisis project, traveled to Moscow and released the documents, precipitating a historical revision of the affair. Even former U.S. officials conceded that, had they been in the Soviets' shoes, they might have concluded that a U.S.-backed invasion was imminent.

Along with its numerous coups, the archive has also had more than its share of run-ins with the State Department, the CIA, and the FBI when it sought documents from them. At one point the Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy even set up a hot line for government agencies to call when the archive requested material.

"The archive, because of its institutional being, will be in conflict with the government, any government, whether it's a Democratic or Republican administration," Blanton observes. "No government welcomes an outside watchdog which is tracking its statements and highlighting contradictions."

Armstrong sees his conflicts with the Ford Foundation and the Fund for Peace as heralding a less outspoken era for the archive, an era during which its advocacy work will be diminished. Others say the greatest threat to the archive could be the diminished presence of Armstrong, who now serves as a member of the board and assists the archive in its litigation efforts. "I made it clear that I thought the future of the organization depended very much on having Scott continue to be centrally involved in the policy and advocacy side of the archive," says John Shattuck, chairman of the archive's board through 1989.

Archive staff members are already talking about starting up new projects, possibly one on Panama and another on the drug war. Then, too, there is the alluring prospect of the trial of John Poindexter. The archive has thousands of documents relating to Poindexter, and its third document set, on the Iran-contra affair, is scheduled to be released in mid-April, by which time the trial should be under way. This may provide just the sort of energizing event the archive needs to move forward after a time of trouble. ♦

WHEN THE WALLS COME TUMBLING DOWN

BY MICHAEL HOYT

The cover of the November issue of *Lear's* is graced with the face of a woman with stunning blue-gray eyes. We turn the page to a red and luscious two-page spread for Samsara, a new perfume by Guerlain of Paris that delivers, the ad suggests, "a sense of serenity."

Four pages later comes the table of contents where, in the credit lines, we learn that the woman on the cover wears makeup from Guerlain and that "her fragrance is Samsara."

In a paragraph at the top of the same page we learn more: the cover person is Lois Doherty-Mander, who lives in Manhattan with her insurance-company vice-president husband and her two children. We also learn — *Lear's* is positively upfront about it — that she is director of public relations for . . . Guerlain. What has she been working on lately? Doherty-Mander's "most recent project has been the launch of Guerlain's new perfume, Samsara."

This is surely a thing of beauty from the advertiser's perspective — a striking advertisement supplemented by the very cover of the magazine, a new fragrance product with the essence of editorial credibility tastefully misted all over it. Guerlain, it is worth noting, bought two and two-thirds ad pages inside the November *Lear's* (for anti-wrinkle products) as well as the sumptuous Samsara spread in the pre-

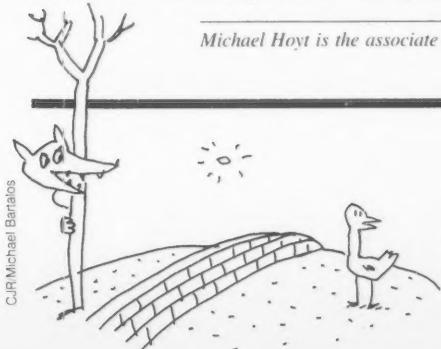
mium inside-the-cover position, for a total bill that surely contributed to the publisher's sense of serenity. Frances Lear, the magazine's editor-in-chief, calls the plethora of plugs a "terrible mistake." *Lear's* would not normally push any beauty product in the cover credits, she says, but Doherty-Mander insisted and "we had no backup that month." And Lear says she did not know until too late that the Samsara ad was inside the cover. As for the idea of using a major advertiser as a cover subject in the first place, Lear first said it was a mistake that would not be repeated, but after a few minutes of conversation, in which she mentioned the number of fashion designers who appear on the covers of magazines where they advertise these days, she reconsidered — "strike all that" — arguing that "this kind of thing is done all the time."

True but sad. From a reader's perspective this confluence of advertising and editorial is confusing: Where does the sales pitch end? Where does the editor take over?

The ad/edit duet continues inside the November *Lear's*, although in a somewhat less pioneering vein. On page forty-two, a left-hand page in the Money & Worth section of the magazine, for example, is an assessment of Chrysler's new Eagle Talon that is at least as excited about the sports car as the full-page Eagle Talon advertisement on page forty-three, just opposite. Another mistake, says Lear.

But why pick on *Lear's*? Magazines of all stripes are

Michael Hoyt is the associate editor of CJR.



CJR Michael Barbatos

Once upon a time,
magazine editors edited and
advertisers advertised. . .



'I believe in editorial integrity, but a lot of people have old-fashioned ideas of what integrity means'

magazine consultant Robert Cohen

suddenly competing to give advertisers something extra — "value added" in ad-world lingo — in return for their business. Many of these extras are perfectly legitimate and have little or nothing to do with editorial content; others fall into a gray and foggy area; still others involve the selling of pieces of editorial integrity, from slivers to chunks to truckloads.

Pressure from advertisers is not new, of course; magazine professionals say it was always there, particularly in the women's and the trade magazine fields. What's new is the intensity of the demands, the extension of certain kinds of demands to the kind of magazines whose reputations once kept them immune, and the snowball effect that results when too many magazines suddenly relax their standards. What makes the situation worse is the fact that, at many magazines, the great wall that once separated the business side from the editorial side and protected editors and publishers from temptation is, like today's Berlin Wall, more monument than barrier.

"In private conversations among editors that [advertiser pressure] is talked about all the time," says Daniel Okrent, the founding editor of *New England Monthly* magazine, now a writer and consultant. "Get them up on a panel at the MPA/Folio convention [the Magazine Publishers of America and *Folio* magazine] and it doesn't exist. It's hilarious." Still, in the December *Folio*, more than 40 percent of the 250 editors who had responded to the magazine's survey said they had been told by their ad director or publisher "to do something that you felt seriously compromised editorial." (More than 70 percent of the consumer magazine part of that group said they had refused, as did nearly 50 percent of trade magazine editors.)

"Is there pressure? You bet there's pressure. There is huge pressure," says David Long, advertising director for *People* magazine. "Not only is there pressure, but it's been successful. It's 'If you do this, we'll do that.' The whole world is softening, and it's cheapening the whole business."

"I hope we see that this is horrifying," says Samir A. Husni, a well-known magazine watcher and a journalism teacher at the University of Mississippi. "I hope we step back from it."

Stuart Ewen, chairman of the communications department at Hunter College and author of a recent book on advertising, *All Consuming Images*, sums up the recent change in the relationship between magazines and advertisers this way: "At one time marketers viewed magazines as a place in which they could rent space for advertising. Today they view them as real estate holdings. Once you own real estate,

you begin to think about the neighborhood, the surroundings, changing the shrubbery and so forth."

Part of the reason for this power shift is the revolution in marketing in the '70s and '80s: as advertisers feared that consumers were growing resistant to their generalized mass advertising they began to aim at market segments — specific groups of people with spending money. Niche marketing led to niche magazines, many of them centered on specific activities — decorating, investing, computing, boating, etc. — or at least around the tastes and sensibilities of the target group. These days many magazines are hatched more as marketing concepts than as editorial ideas; at their core they are advertising delivery vehicles.

Ewen fears that these developments have exerted a gravitational tug on all the media, creating a degree of confusion about the role of journalism in the minds of journalists, advertisers, and the public. "As journalism becomes more marketing oriented, the task of what it is to be a journalist and what it is to be an advertiser becomes more and more similar," Ewen says. "The task becomes keeping people interested in a certain range of goods or activities."

Such a shift does not happen all at once, but in increments, collections of seemingly small and innocuous decisions. *The New York Times* adds another boutique section; *Rolling Stone* starts covering fashion; *U.S. News & World Report* adds another ad-building annual "Guide" on fitness or investing or home ownership, displacing who knows what; *Lear's* adds another product-mentioning article, such as the one on perfumes in November (one of five product-mentioning pieces in that issue), which manages to mention twenty-four perfumes by name, five of them advertised in the same issue.

Accelerating this trend is a supply-and-demand dilemma. Advertising expenditures have been fairly flat since the mid-1980s and, although magazines as a group have held their own in competition with other media, they are in ferocious competition with each other. They keep dividing the ad-dollar pie into more and more pieces. Husni, who has tracked the birth of new magazines for years, estimates that about 100 new ones appeared in the year 1968. During 1988 he counted 491, and approximately 580 last year. "There are too many publications and a limited number of advertising dollars," says Don E. Schultz, a professor of advertising at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

The scramble for ad dollars led to rate cutting — rate-card discounts for heavy advertisers. But rate cutting is

profits cutting. The keynote speaker at the MPA/*Folio* convention last fall, George V. Grune of the Reader's Digest Association, called it "a plague on our business" that is "spreading like a virus gone wild." As a defense against this virus, publishers developed the notion of value-added advertising — giving the advertiser something more than just a page. "I wouldn't blame it all on the advertiser," says Schultz. "The advertiser says, 'We are going to buy thirty-six pages somewhere, but your rates are too high. You want X, we can pay Y.' So the publisher says, 'You pay X, and we can do this and this and this.'

What this and this and this is depends on the magazine. *Good Housekeeping's* Seal of Approval is an ancient ancestor of value added advertising. More recently, *The New Yorker* lent its name to a luxury car road rally. *TV Guide* is offering free bonus ads and a free telephone listing to advertisers who buy a certain number of pages in special editorial packages, such as "celebrity diet and exercise tips." *Parenting* co-sponsors "baby fairs," where advertiser products are displayed. *People* offers new advertisers, or old ones who increase their spending by half a million dollars, space on the monthly health club posters created by Whittle Communications (and recently acquired by Time Warner), and for select advertisers who are interested, *People* is now even in a position to help set up sponsored entertainment tours, along the lines of last year's Budweiser/Rolling Stones concert series.

These kinds of extras would seem to have little or no effect on the editorial part of the magazines. But there is another kind of added value that magazines can offer for sale — their own editorial content. Consider a former publisher for a major retail trade publication. Since he is job hunting and asked that his name not be printed, let's call him X. Like most trade magazines, X's routinely covered products made by advertisers. But X says he kept his ad sales staff and his editors and writers apart from each other and strictly avoided the quid pro quo. Under that system, the magazine was profitable, despite some belt-tightening in the industry it covered, but not profitable enough for X's boss. The boss began selling big, long-term advertising packages "and promising cover stories as a sweetener to close the deal," says X. "It wasn't in the contract, of course, but he'd do it with me standing right there."

It became X's job to order editors to drum up stories on subjects that were sometimes not legitimate, upbeat cover

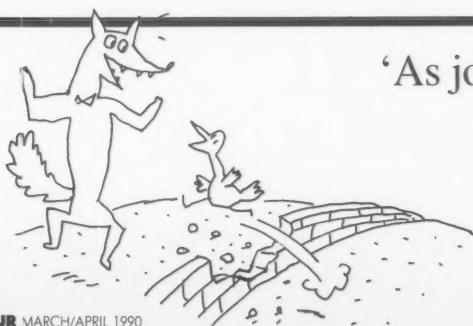
stories on companies that were actually fading, for example. Two editors quit over ethics. In January, X quit, leaving behind a \$100,000-plus salary. "I asked myself if I could do this anymore, and the answer was no," he says. X thinks the magazine will increase profits for a while under the new system, but will begin to sink in tandem with the magazine's reputation. Once the editorial content is devalued, he figures, the magazine becomes less valuable to advertisers.

We are less shocked, perhaps, at such a story in a trade magazine than we would be about compromises at top consumer magazines, but it is clear that the pressure to sell out can be just as strong in the consumer field these days. According to a former editor at *Manhattan, inc.*, when the magazine approached fashion designer/potential advertiser Ralph Lauren for a story a few years ago, his organization attached certain conditions: the cover, approval of the writer (Lauren's people had two specific writers in mind, as the editor recalls), and a guaranteed minimum number of pages. Lauren's representatives even wanted to pick the photographer and the photographs, the former editor says, but *Manhattan, inc.* turned down the deal. It is hard to know whether other magazines have struck such deals, but there are cases that invite scrutiny. *Vanity Fair's* puffy profile of Lauren in February 1988, for example, was illustrated by the same photographer who shoots Lauren's ads. As Daniel Lazare noted in this magazine (see "Vanity Fare," CJR May/June 1989), *Vanity Fair* is apparently addicted to obsequious stories about fashion designers who, in turn, purchase many ad pages in the magazine. André Leon Talley, who wrote *Vanity Fair's* cover piece on Calvin and Kelly Klein, explained to Lazare that a fashion writer's job is not to probe or investigate but "to seduce a consumer into a store."

Sometimes an advertising/editorial connection is right out front. *Family Circle*, the nation's largest women's magazine (owned by The New York Times Magazine Group), joined forces with mega-retailer K Mart last year with the aid of style and entertainment author Martha Stewart, who is a *Family Circle* contributing editor as well as K Mart's "life-style and entertaining consultant." According to a fascinating article by Randall Rothenberg in the January 18, 1989, *New York Times*, K Mart helped to finance the reconstruction of one of Stewart's country houses. *Family Circle* then covered the reconstruction in three articles, starting in February 1989. K Mart, in turn, purchased more than sixty pages of advertising in the magazine — worth some \$4 million, according to the *Times* — including three eight-to-twelve-page advertorial sections that include de-

'As journalism becomes more marketing oriented, the task of a journalist and an advertiser becomes more and more similar.'

Stuart Ewen, author, All Consuming Images



both: CJR/Michael Bartolos



'At one time marketers viewed magazines as a place to rent space for advertising. Today they view them as real estate holdings. Once you own real estate, you begin to think about the neighborhood. . . changing the shrubbery. . . '

Stuart Ewen

scriptions of K Mart products useful for renovating homes. The advertorials were also to be distributed at K Marts, which were to introduce a Martha Stewart line of products. K Mart, in short, got quite a lot of value added — editorial support from a magazine with a readership of twenty-one million.

Rule 4 of the "Guidelines for Special Advertising Sections" promulgated by the American Society of Magazine Editors states that "editors and other editorial staff members should not prepare advertising sections for their own publications." Advertorials are designed to give ads an aura of editorial credibility, and ASME tries to keep them within certain bounds. ASME's enforcement tool is a polite letter of reprimand to the magazine.

Its guidelines seem to be widely ignored. Rule 2b, for example, says that "the layout, design, and type" of special ad sections should be distinctly different from the publication's editorial look, but the November *Elle* includes a fifteen-page advertorial section that mimics the look of the magazine. The January 15 *U.S. News & World Report* contains three advertorials — on Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia — which might be mistaken for editorial matter and which, although they carry disclaimers at the bottom of every other page, do not identify the section as advertising at the top, as rule 1A requires.

Rule 2c says special advertising sections should not be slugged on the cover, but the top cover line of November's *Popular Photography* announces a "Special Advertorial Section" about video filmmaking and equipment. Rule 3 says that "the editors' names and titles should not appear on, or be associated with, special advertising sections," but in November's *Automobile Magazine* we find a thirty-four-page "special supplement" all about Volkswagen. All the advertisements in the supplement are also about Volkswagen. The insert has its own masthead — a condensed version of the magazine's masthead — and the editorial value lines about Volkswagen products and Volkswagen history are written and illustrated by *Automobile* staff members, including the editor.

Esquire sailed at least close to the edge of rule number 4, the one about editors not preparing advertorials, with its Absolut Vodka short story contest, sponsored by Absolut's distributors, Carillon Importers. The stories had to include the words "Absolut Vodka" to be eligible and, according to both the original rules in the magazine and the introduction to the winning story, which ran in the December *Es-*

quire, they were judged by "a panel of *Esquire* editors and Carillon officials" under the supervision of Smiley Promotion Inc., an independent judging organization. *Esquire* editor-in-chief Lee Eisenberg says that once he learned about the contest, hatched by *Esquire*'s marketing staff, he ruled out the participation of his editors. "No *Esquire* editor was involved in any way," he says, adding that the fact that the introduction to the winning story says otherwise is a mistake "that slipped by me."

In any event, the perception that a magazine of *Esquire*'s stature had crossed the line gave the publisher of another major magazine a nervous moment. Carillon invites magazine representatives to its Teaneck, New Jersey, offices each year, and last spring the publisher, who asked not to be identified, says the company was all abuzz about *Esquire*'s innovation. "They said, 'Isn't this a great idea? Could you come up with something similar?' They wanted something that would use our editorial reputation as a way of promoting liquor sales. Fortunately, I was able to steer the conversation in another direction." When one magazine bends the rules, or even appears to bend the rules, it creates a little more pressure on the next one.

The advertorials battle is earnestly fought but it's really only a police action along the frontier, where the main rule is fairly clear: advertising copy ought not to pretend to be editorial material.

The real war is being waged not on the border, but deep within the editorial interior. The issue is to what degree should editorial content be shaped for the purpose of attracting or keeping advertising.

The old doctrine — strict church/state separation of editorial and advertising — remains strong at many reputable magazines. "We take the old-fashioned view that in the long run you'll be the most successful in the commercial sense if you are successful in the editorial sense," says Stephen Shephard, editor of *Business Week*.

But there is a competing doctrine these days. "This is not the 1950s any more; this is a very, very competitive world," says magazine consultant Robert Cohen, whose clients include CJR. "Readers and advertisers are having to pay more to keep these magazines alive. I believe in editorial integrity, but a lot of people have old-fashioned ideas of what integrity means. There is not one standard definition that applies to everyone." He notes that magazines are integrated businesses that require the cooperation of editors

and publishers. As for the decline of the church/state doctrine, "Thank God," says Cohen.

Cohen, a former publisher of *The New Republic*, would give advertisers the "compatible, friendly editorial environment" they want, up to the point of "serious editorial damage: Are readers harmed?" Daniel Okrent, the former editor of *New England Monthly*, fashions a strikingly different guideline. "Am I really serving my readers?"

Still, editors who operate without that church/state wall are susceptible to a variety of subtle pressures. Once they are made part of the business team they become reluctant to make decisions that might lower the score.

"The ad sales people would say, 'Gosh, you've got this depressing stuff here that makes it hard to sell,'" says Okrent. "Editors and publishers do an elaborate dance." Another magazine consultant, this one a former publisher, describes one of the dance steps: "A publisher will say, 'I hear you are doing a story on, say, John Deere. Don't let this affect you, but John Deere is buying forty-eight pages of advertising.' At one time it was unthinkable that a publisher would ever say that to an editor. Now it happens all the time."

Since cigarette companies are heavy advertisers, developments in the tobacco and health story is a classic and fairly obvious example of the kind of issue many magazines are reluctant to light up (see "The Magazines' Smoking Habit," CJR, January/February 1978). In a four-year study of tobacco and health coverage in major women's magazines — including *Ms.*, *McCall's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Woman's Day* — Lauren Kessler noted recently in *Journalism Quarterly* that "none of the magazines covered one of the more significant women's health stories of the decade: the ascendance of lung cancer as the number one cancer killer of women."

Abortion is another topic known not to thrill some advertisers. But the topics advertisers dislike are not always so obviously controversial. Mary Kay Blakely, who writes frequently for women's magazines and has long gray hair, remembers a conversation with an editor of a leading women's magazine who also has long gray hair, telling her that an article about the glories of gray hair once cost her magazine the Clairol account for six months. James Fallows, *The Atlantic's* Washington editor, says that when he was writing from Japan recently some major Japanese advertisers told him that, while their first instinct is to advertise wherever it is effective, they are disinclined to advertise in publications critical of their country. Fallows did not want to say whether he felt these comments were directed at *The Atlantic*, for whom he was writing a series of tough articles

on Japan's trade policies. These are the kinds of sensitivities that, when conveyed to editors who are not protected by the editorial/advertising wall, lead to self-censorship, if not to censorship.

The fear of controversy has a flip side — the attraction to articles that tend to generate ads. It is easy to tilt, just a little, perhaps, to a story about Disney World, European travel, or whatever — articles that might help sell ads — and to convince yourself that you have done so for strictly editorial reasons. Most editors, presumably, would rule out commissioning laudatory articles on heavy advertisers, such as fashion designers. But most decisions are not so clear cut. What about starting a regular fashion section to attract ad dollars? "Is it great journalism? Is it a crime? No, it's neither," says an editor turned consultant. "Most editors can justify that: 'A good idea is a good idea; fashion is of interest to my readers, so why not?' That's the top of the slippery slope. The way I would try to view it is, Does it make sense editorially? If it does, I wouldn't care if it derived out of an advertising imperative.

"Editors are always thinking of advertising categories," he adds, "although they'll deny it." This accelerates the proliferation of articles and sections on such subjects as travel, home design, investing, automobiles, health, and fashion, along with such women's-magazine staples as food and beauty. Deciding whether or not to run such sections is not the only decision, of course: How puffy are they to be? Should they mention products by name? Only advertised products? And how much of the magazine is to be surrendered? What do they crowd out? Valerie Muller, vice-president and media director for the ad agency Pedone & Partners, says that these sections have proliferated to such a degree that some clients complain about them, contending that they are out of character with the rest of a magazine's personality.

"We live in a real world, where advertising is a matter of survival," says *Esquire's* Eisenberg. "It behooves me to find that intersecting point between what a reader wants and expects and what advertisers want and expect. The only pressure I feel is the pressure I impose upon myself to make sure that *Esquire* does have revenues from advertising to the optimum amount we can and still preserve editorial. If there isn't a discernible reader value to something, I won't do it."

As a case in point, Eisenberg cites *Esquire's* "Express Traveler," a foldout guide for the tourist in a rush. "I knew that our readers travel a lot. What could we do that is valuable to them? It dawned on me that they probably travel like I do, on short trips," he says. "There was no doubt

'It behooves me to find that intersecting point between what a reader wants and expects and what advertisers want and expect'

Lee Eisenberg, editor, *Esquire*

in my mind that as I was formulating these things they were conducive to travel advertising. That's fine. No one told me to do more travel coverage; it just so happens that both ends were served."

But *Harper's Magazine* publisher John R. MacArthur, something of a purist on these matters, cites *Esquire* as "the classic case of a fine magazine going to seed with this stuff. Take a look at the editorial," he says. "You wouldn't need all those articles about what to drink, what to wear, or whatever without advertisers in mind, would you?" The February *Esquire*, it should be noted, carries seventy-seven and two-thirds pages of advertising, compared with twenty-nine in the February *Harper's*. Still, editing for advertisers, MacArthur believes, will eventually destroy what advertisers want in magazines in the first place — an environment of quality and trust. At the bottom of this slippery slope he sees Christopher Whittle, whose Whittle Communications specializes in creating slick and bland editorial products to justify advertising aimed at captive audiences in places like doctors' offices, health clubs, and schools.

"It's ass-backwards," MacArthur says. "You are supposed to edit for the reader and sell to the advertisers."

Blaming the advertisers for all these trends in the magazine world also seems ass-backwards. "Advertisers are not evil," says Robin Wolaner, publisher of *Parenting* and a former publisher of *Mother Jones*. "If they're being allowed that kind of power, they'd be stupid not to take it. What I found about advertisers is that when you've got an editorial policy, they respect it. The publishers who have problems have created them themselves." MacArthur agrees. "Advertisers are supposed to extract all the value from you that they can. Publishers are supposed to draw the line."

And editors. What if they don't? Let's check the crystal ball. Cross my palm with silver. Stare deeply. Behold: we see more magazines filled with ersatz journalism, more blurry advertorials. We see more editors tossing in their beds, haunted by the ghosts of controversial and thoughtful stories that should have been assigned instead of this month's Caribbean travel or holiday drink-recipe feature.

Stare deeper, deeper into the crystal, my friend, where we see a sort of editorial environmental crisis — advertisers and magazine people beginning to realize that credibility, like petroleum or the ozone, is a fragile, limited resource. Listen. A major advertiser is talking to his media buyers in some futuristic teleconference. "Who needs magazines?" he says from the big screen. "Let's get Chris Whittle to come up with something projected on the ceilings over dentists' chairs." ♦

DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

Hall's Magazine Reports is a monthly publication that breaks down the editorial content of some eighty-five magazines into 170 categories, from foreign news to fitness to food, by number of pages, number of lines, and percentage of all the editorial matter in the magazine. According to the year-end issue, for example, *U.S. News & World Report* ran 56,650 lines inches of copy about health in 1989, while *Time* ran just 23,936.

Who cares? Lots of advertisers do. Many of them prefer what *Hall's* publisher, Philip R. Morris, calls a "compatible editorial field" and will tend to put their fitness-equipment ads, say, in a magazine that has a track record of running articles about exercise and fitness. (*U.S. News*, it should be noted, now plans an annual fitness guide.)

Brenda Ingraham and Bonnie Fleming are two mothers from Wabash, Indiana, who, several months ago, took offense at sexually frank articles in *Sassy*, a new magazine aimed at teenage girls, and began "calling every Christian organization I could think of," as Ingraham put it.

Who cares? Lots of advertisers. Not long after Ingraham and Fleming hung up on the phone at least nine major advertisers hung up on *Sassy*, nearly blowing it out of the water and swamping its older sister, *Ms.*, in the bargain.

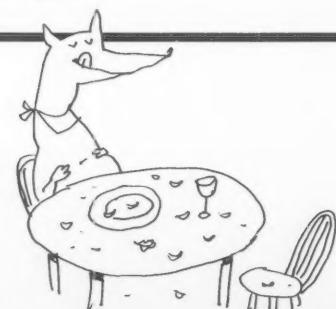
The desire to attract advertisers with "compatible editorial" of various kinds and the desire to avoid making advertisers nervous with controversial articles are like twin moons, circling around and exerting tidal forces on the world of magazines. In deference to these forces, many editors and publishers keep their magazines in safe and shallow waters. *Ms.* and *Sassy* are examples of magazines that explored uncharted seas, and paid a price.

Magazine professionals say that, as a group, women's magazines have historically been most willing to grant "a

'It's ass-backwards.
You are supposed to edit for the reader
and sell to the advertiser.'

John R. MacArthur, publisher, Harper's

OJ/Michael Bartolos



compatible editorial field" to advertisers, a practice that continues today and seems to be expanding into many other categories of magazines, including men's magazines. Some women's magazine editors don't see this as a problem; Ellen Levine, editor of *Woman's Day*, for example, insists that she would produce the same editorial matter even if she did not have to include any advertising. But the founders of *Ms.* decided, reasonably enough, that they did not want their magazine to be stuffed with recipes (for food advertising), beauty tips (for cosmetics), fashion spreads, and the like.

To avoid this trap, in 1972 the founding editors — Gloria Steinem, Patricia Carbine, and others — drew up a two-stage strategy: first, they would try to crack categories of advertising that had not traditionally appeared in women's magazines and that were not traditionally accompanied by excessive editorial demands — financial services, automobiles, wines and liquors, and so forth. Having succeeded in attracting such nontraditional advertisers, they would use that success as a strategy in approaching the traditional women's magazine advertisers. They would not, however, bend to the demand for providing compatible copy. (*Ms.* did, it should be noted, seek and attract cigarette advertising and, like other women's magazines, ran very little about the rise of lung cancer among women).

They had limited success, perhaps in part because they set their initial rates at the level of comparable general interest magazines — much higher than mass circulation women's magazines at the time. Foreign car makers — Volkswagen was the first — quickly saw merit in the *Ms.* argument that its readers had not only a strong relationship with the magazine but also the money and the inclination to buy cars. (American automakers would take nearly fifteen years to come around.)

Attracting traditional women's magazine advertisers proved to be more difficult. Gloria Steinem described some of the difficulties in a speech to the American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1987. "*Ms.* won reader support and jeopardized traditional advertiser support for exactly the same reason: the editorial content wasn't dictated by the ads," she told the advertisers. "The readers loved it; many advertisers loved it less. I suggest to you that there's something wrong in a world in which women readers and advertisers trying to reach them don't want the same thing." To illustrate her point, Steinem told of a cover story *Ms.* had run about four Soviet women who had been exiled for publishing forbidden feminist material, a story she said offered rare insight into pre-*glasnost* Soviet life. Afterwards, *Ms.* lost a major cosmetics account because the advertiser thought that the Soviet women on the cover weren't wearing enough makeup.

In the same speech Steinem announced the sale of the magazine to an Australian publisher, John Fairfax Ltd., which promised to invest a lot of money. Fairfax installed Australian feminist Anne Summers as editor to join Sandra Yates, another Australian, who had been sent in to start *Sassy*. When Fairfax, after the October 1987 stock market crash, decided to sell off its American holdings, Summers

and Yates lined up investors, formed Matilda Publications, and bought the two magazines.

Their hopes were high. Summers made *Ms.* somewhat more commercial — a few more celebrity covers, for example, a regular style column, and more financial advice. Circulation passed 550,000 for the first time in 1988. *Sassy*, meanwhile, which hit the stands in March 1988, was a phenomenon, its circulation climbing to 400,000 in just six months. Its young writers and editors were treating its teenage audience as peers, and the readers seemed to love it. Sex, a topic that teenagers are known to have some interest in, was dealt with straight on — in articles about such things as gay teenagers and the need for tolerance, about the loss of virginity, or "The Truth About Boys Bodies."

That one, for example, was not a hit in Wabash, Indiana. "The below-the-belt section was the largest section," says Brenda Ingraham. "It had the size of the penis, limp and erect, how much semen comes out, the most number of erections per hour. I'm thinking, 'Why do teenage girls need to know this? What will be on the magazine racks when my girls become teenagers?'" Ingraham and her friend Bonnie Fleming, whose teenage daughter had received a direct-mail invitation to subscribe, began alerting organizations such as the American Family Association, in Tupelo, Mississippi, Focus on the Family, in Pomona, California, and others, most of which subsequently ran articles about *Sassy* in their publications. Advertisers began to get letters.

"We pointed out that this wasn't a spontaneous outpouring, but an organized campaign. That didn't seem to have an effect," says Summers. "In July, two weeks after we bought the company, the top six advertisers pulled out." By the next spring Yates, *Sassy*'s creator, stepped down, and Matilda was rumored to be on the block. Dale Lang, owner of *Working Woman* and *Working Mother*, bought a controlling interest in the magazines last October.

Both magazines have changed character. *Sassy* is much less sassy. "We accomplished what we wanted," says Brenda Ingraham. "'Virgins Are Cool' was the headline on a post-boycott story. Meanwhile, the damage to *Sassy*'s revenues undercut *Ms.* Last November's issue, with Glenn Close on the cover, was the last monthly issue. Lang plans to bring it back in the spring as a bimonthly with no advertising. Readers will pay more to make up for the missing ad revenue.

In a letter to subscribers, Gloria Steinem was upbeat. "Goodbye to cigarette ads where poems should be," she wrote. "Goodbye to celebrity covers and too little space. Goodbye to cleaning up language or having *Ms.* advertisers boycotted by the Moral Majority. In fact, goodbye to advertisers and the Moral Majority."

Still, although *Ms.* is likely to remain influential, a place for strong opinion and serious discussion, it has given up its long struggle to be an American mainstream magazine.

Sassy, too, may well survive, as long as it doesn't try too hard to live up to its name. M.H.

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DR. WHELAN'S MEDIA OPERATION

Does industry funding make the American Council on Science and Health any less credible?

BY HOWARD KURTZ

Talk show host Larry King introduced her simply as Elizabeth Whelan, "executive director of the American Council on Science and Health." She was, King said, "a critic" of the environmentalists who were protesting the use of the pesticide Alar on apples. With that, the scrappy, red-haired Whelan proceeded to dominate *Larry King Live*, calling the Alar uproar "an absolute travesty" fomented by "rather irresponsible" journalists.

"If we ban everything that causes cancer in mice, we're going to have very little to eat," Whelan declared. "I think it's the fault primarily of some members of the media, who indiscriminately air these views without a scientific perspective."

What King neglected to tell his viewers is that Whelan's group receives more than half its funding from corporations and corporate foundations, many of

Howard Kurtz is New York bureau chief of The Washington Post.

Nancy Pindrus



Dr. Whelan,
at ease
with apples
— and Alar

them food and chemical companies. The American Council on Science and Health has even gotten a grant of at least \$25,000 from the Uniroyal Chemical Company, the manufacturer of Alar.

"It was a mistake. We probably should have said that on the program," concedes Randall Douthit, senior executive producer of the Cable News Network show. "We were looking for that side, someone to represent the chemical companies."

The King broadcast has had plenty of company. In the past year, such news organizations as The Associated Press, United Press International, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Dallas Times Herald*, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, *The Oregonian*, Knight-Ridder, and the Newhouse News Service have quoted Whelan or her group without mentioning its industry funding. *USA Today* offered no description when Whelan, defined only as a "guest columnist," defended Red Dye No. 3.

Does it really matter that more than \$630,000 of Whelan's \$1.1 million budget comes from the likes of Exxon, Union Carbide, Dow Chemical, Johnson & Johnson, General Mills, Con Edison, and Coca-Cola? Since founding the group in 1978, Whelan has argued tirelessly that the funding question is irrelevant. In an interview in her Manhattan office, Whelan, who is forty-five, betrays a touch of exasperation about what she calls "this incredible dichotomy — either you are pro-environment or you're a hired gun for industry. It's chilling the discussion. Everyone is funded by someone."

Besides, she says, "if you consider the possibility that we do believe in what we're doing — that it is wrong to terrify people about trace levels of chemicals that cause cancer in mice — where could you get money? Where would such money come from that would not be tainted?"

Whelan's detractors scoff at her insistence that she is not influenced by her corporate benefactors. "That's what politicians say about all the PAC money they get," says Michael Jacobson, founder and executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington. "She certainly hasn't been

in the business of kicking her contributors in the teeth.

"Industry invests in this pretend consumer group, and the investment pays off nicely when there's a controversy," Jacobson adds. "Most reporters, wire-service people, and local TV producers don't have any idea who the group is. There's such flux among reporters and TV producers that it's impossible to keep everyone apprised."

To be sure, Whelan's seven-person organization is hardly the only one to use a neutral-sounding name to peddle an ideological message. Groups ranging from the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness (funded by utilities) to Citizens for the Republic (Ronald Reagan's PAC) increasingly litter the landscape.

But few opinion-molders are as ubiquitous as Whelan. She has written twenty books (with such titles as *The Nutrition Hoax*, *Panic in the Pantry*, *Balanced Nutrition: Beyond the Cholesterol Scare*), contributed to such magazines as *Mirabella* and *American Baby*, and been interviewed on *Nightline*, *60*

Minutes, and *The MacNeil/ Lehrer NewsHour*. Her op-ed pieces have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and dozens of smaller papers across the country.

Television producers like Whelan because she's colorful and succinct, skewering her adversaries with such phrases as "toxic terrorists" and "self-appointed environmentalists," and referring to their research as "voodoo statistics." Newspaper reporters often dial her number because she is an easily accessible spokesperson for the "other" side of many controversies.

Whelan's philosophy is simple. She believes that small amounts of industrial chemicals, pesticides, and food additives are not harmful, period, even those that have been shown in laboratory experiments to cause cancer in animals. Whelan ridicules such tests — the underpinning of the entire federal system for regulating carcinogens — by saying that there are far more natural cancer-

ALAR AS A MEDIA

The controversy over Alar, the trade name for the chemical daiminozide, began as far back as 1973, when animal tests showed that a breakdown product of Alar — formed when apples are cooked to make apple juice and applesauce — was 1,000 times more carcinogenic than Alar itself. Last year, the debate became a major media event when, to cite a memorable example, *60 Minutes* aired a segment on Alar on February 26 that was seen by an estimated 50 million viewers. In the first six months of 1989 lengthy articles on the controversy appeared in all three newsweeklies, in leading science publications, in both *Consumer Reports* and *Consumers' Research*, and in the nation's major dailies.

What prompted the intense coverage? Experts offer a variety of explanations. "First, there's the symbolism," says Pe-

ter Sandman, director of the Environmental Communication Research Program at Rutgers University. "If it had been bananas, there would have been a lot less public outrage and media attention. Apples are a symbol of innocence and innocence betrayed. Kids eat them. There's the Adam and Eve story, and Snow White. It was a wonderful symbol for cartoonists and it captures something in our culture." Edward Groth III, who supervised the lab tests on apple juice for *Consumer Reports* and wrote much of that magazine's May 1989 cover story, says the Alar debate touched on three powerful symbolic issues: cancer, children, and apples. "It was irresistible — powerful symbolism to the media that the system isn't working and something had to be done."

Then there was the fact that the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy group based in New York City, having completed a two-year study of Alar, hired a public relations group to publicize its findings.

Doug Haddix is a former reporter who is now a graduate student of journalism at Indiana University.

causing substances than man-made ones. Whelan also believes that the link between heart disease and a high-fat, high-cholesterol diet is greatly exaggerated. She has minimized the dangers of low doses of a wide range of substances, from asbestos to caffeine, from Agent Orange to PCBs. The key to good health, she argues, lies in basic measures like not smoking cigarettes (one subject on which she agrees with liberal environmentalists) and buckling your seat belt.

To her credit, Whelan fully discloses her corporate funding each year. But the interests of her benefactors inevitably raise questions: Could there be any connection between Whelan's defense of saccharin and funding from Coca-Cola, the PepsiCo Foundation, the NutraSweet Company, and the National Soft Drink Association? Her praise for fast food and a grant from Burger King? Her assurances about a high-fat diet and support from Oscar Mayer Foods, Hershey Foods Fund, Frito-Lay, and Land O'Lakes? Her defense of hormones in cows and backing from the National Dairy

Council and American Meat Institute?

"I'm very proud of my relationship with corporations," Whelan says. "I put their names all over my literature." Still, Whelan says that many corporate donors expect her to endorse specific products or chemicals, adding that she loses at least 10 percent of her funding each year "because we will not do what we're told."

"But if the American Meat Institute wants to come in here and give us a grant of \$10,000 or \$20,000," Whelan says, "I assume they're not doing so because of our positions on AIDS." She adds that some corporate benefactors have tried to influence the group's findings: "People have actually told us to change things, or numbers."

Despite her misgivings, Whelan aggressively seeks out corporate money, including \$160,000 to finance a television documentary that aired last summer. *Big Fears, Little Risks* was narrated by Walter Cronkite (who was paid a fee of \$25,000) and featured only scientists who believe, as Cronkite put it, that in-

dustrial carcinogens make "a negligible contribution to the cancer toll in this country." (See Darts and Laurels, CJR, September/October 1989.) Cronkite introduced Whelan as one of "a growing number of scientists who fear that overstating the risk of environmental chemicals is actually threatening the health of Americans."

The former CBS News anchorman says he did not know of ACSH's corporate funding when he agreed to narrate the broadcast. "I did not do my homework well enough," Cronkite says, adding that he "certainly would have investigated a lot more thoroughly" had he known of the industry backing.

Nevertheless, he says, "I read the script and agreed with what I read. I would defend that broadcast completely. I agree with the idea that we've got to assess risk in the world today. I'm not carrying water for any chemical additive or any damn chemical company."

Asked why no one with a dissenting view was interviewed, Cronkite says, "The broadcast was meant to be a point-

EVENT

BY DOUG HADDIX

On the advice of Fenton Communications, NRDC officials agreed to grant *60 Minutes* exclusive coverage of the report, which would be issued at a news conference the day after the CBS broadcast. However, parts of the report were leaked. *Newsweek*, for example, published a piece on the findings in its January 30 issue, nearly a month before *60 Minutes* aired its story. The NRDC's executive director, John Adams, later told a *Washington Post* reporter, "We wanted to get a maximum amount of coverage. What we did instead was that we blew it. We got everybody angry at us. I'll never let myself get in this situation again."

Lorraine Voles, who served as national coordinator of Mothers and Others for Pesticide Limits, an NRDC project that enlisted support from actress Meryl Streep and other celebrities during the Alar dispute, expresses no regrets. "I think those tactics have to be used," she says, referring to the p.r. firm's handling of the report. "It's like handicapping

yourself if you don't do it. You must use the media to get your message out. Not to use the media is naive."

The Alar issue appeared in the media in some cases as an argument between environmentalists and the government about whether the chemical posed a cancer risk. The NRDC claimed that 5,500 to 6,200 children might develop cancer over their lifetime because of exposure during their preschool years to Alar and seven other pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Department of Agriculture issued a joint statement declaring apples and apple products safe to eat.

Sources on all sides of the Alar issue tossed out numbers and statistics to support their positions. What many stories failed to note, however, was that the EPA and the NRDC were essentially in agreement on a fundamental point: the chemical does pose a risk of cancer.

Sandman at Rutgers says the difference in risk estimates between the two

Renato Rotolo/Agence France-Presse



STAR WITNESS: Meryl Streep testified against use of pesticides like Alar. FDA head Frank Young was reassuring.

sides was "surprisingly small," adding that the dispute really centered around one question: What's the proper response to uncertainty? EPA officials insisted that Alar should be taken off the market gradually because scientific studies did not point conclusively to it as a serious carcinogen in humans. The NRDC held that, in the face of such uncertainty, the government should ban the chemical immediately — a better-safe-than-sorry stance.

of-view broadcast. It was meant to be propaganda." That distinction, of course, may have been lost on some of those hearing the authoritative resonance of Cronkite's voice. Whelan says that the ACSH turned to Cronkite after trying unsuccessfully to hire Ronald Reagan.

Whelan's campaign in defense of saturated fats — widely regarded as boosting cholesterol levels — offers a revealing case study in how newspaper reporters deal with her. Early last year, after Whelan criticized a Nebraska businessman's crusade to force food companies to stop using fatty tropical oils, James A. Fussell, a general assignment reporter for *The Kansas City Star*, covered the controversy. He quoted Whelan in defense of tropical oils, describing her as head of "a national nonprofit consumer education and advocacy group."

"I needed to get another perspective in there and was told about the council," Fussell says. "I tried to get more information about them. I found out later that they were funded by interests that would say palm oil was not bad for you. I had sort of a funny feeling about them."

Nevertheless, he says, "I was under some time duress and was trying to get something in to balance the perspective on this. We got into a debate with my editor, who said, 'Shouldn't we check these folks out a little closer? Who are these people?'"

During a last-minute callback to the ACSH, Fussell says, "They went into such a long spiel that they wore me out. They provided some long-winded justification of their objectivity. But the editor was screaming for the story, and by the time I got into all that the story was five times too long."

In an article on the same dispute, Mary McGrath, medical writer for the *Omaha World-Herald*, took pains to describe the ACSH as "heavily financed by corporations, including food, oil, and chemical companies, as well as trade associations with a direct interest in topics that the council addresses." McGrath told her readers that the Hill and Knowlton public relations firm, whose clients include the Malaysian palm-oil licensing authority, was helping Whelan on the issue. She also noted that Whelan, who has a doctorate in public health from Harvard, "is not a medical doctor."

"To me, it's just basic reporting,"

McGrath says. "I don't think it's fair to pitch out the name 'American Council' and assume [readers] would know what it was about. When you're getting into an issue like that, everyone needs to know where the money is coming from. Common sense tells the average person that people with an interest at stake aren't very likely to hand over their money to someone who's going to stab them in the back."

Whelan's involvement with corporations goes beyond the funding of the ACSH. She often speaks around the country as the paid guest of trade associations or lobbying groups. Whelan says she made eight or so speeches for industry groups last year, receiving from \$5,000 to \$6,000 per speech.

Last winter, Whelan spoke to the Iowa legislature about pesticide safety, courtesy of the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association. She stopped off for a session at *The Des Moines Register*, which noted in an editorial that the ACSH "regularly comes down on the side of business and against consumer-advocate groups." But the editorial also said it was difficult for the consumer, "cast adrift in a sea of statistics," to know who was telling the truth about questionable chemicals.

"I'm glad they exist, but I hope everyone knows where they're coming from," says *Register* editorial writer Bill Leonard. "Who is to say which comes first, the financing or the point of view?

"There is a lot of truth in what Whelan is saying," he adds. "Enough carrot juice will kill you and a tiny amount of anything won't kill you." The press has "gone overboard" on environmental controversies, he says, and Whelan's group adds "a little perspective."

Yet perspective is precisely what is lacking in many stories quoting Whelan. On one hand, *New York Times* health reporter Warren E. Leary, in a piece on carcinogens, was savvy enough to describe the ACSH as "a New York research group that often supports industry positions on regulating chemicals." But the AP, in a story on pesticides carried by the *Times* and other large papers, offered no description of Whelan's sources of funding while quoting her as saying there is "no evidence" of cancer risk from "the minute pesticide residues in food." Whelan's arguments have also been featured, with no description of the ACSH's funders or philosophy, in a slew of news stories and syndicated opinion pieces bearing such headlines as **Hysteria obscures issue of toxins, carcinogens, and consumers concerns are misplaced, scientists say, and doctor says Alar fear needless.**

It was the great Alar scare of 1989 that boosted Whelan into the media stratosphere. Her ascent began last February when *60 Minutes* questioned the pesticide's safety based on a leaked report by the Natural Resources Defense Council. After the initial furor died down, Whelan was in the forefront of a second wave of coverage in which scientists, federal of-

TEN TIPS ON RISK

Reporters confronted with covering a risk issue might consider the following questions suggested by Dr. Vincent Covello, professor of public health at Columbia University and past director of the National Science Foundation's Risk Analysis Program:

- What is the probability that people might be harmed, and to what degree?
- How much of the assessment of risk is based on assumption or guesswork?
- If there is an uncertainty in the data, do the conclusions reflect that?
- What are the study's limitations?



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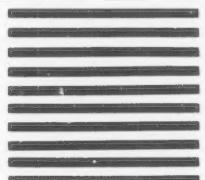
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ficials, and others said that the data on Alar were inconclusive and that the whole controversy had been overblown — an argument that dovetailed nicely with Whelan's larger message.

Robin Whyatt, a senior staff scientist for the NRDC, recalls debating Alar with Whelan on the syndicated television program *Wall Street Journal Report*, whose moderator did not mention the ACSH's funding. "Her comments were not those of a scientist," Whyatt says. "They were the comments of a person who would do anything in her power to discredit this report."

Whelan isn't shy about fighting back. Last spring, Whelan told the *Bangor Daily News* that the NRDC is an "ideological-fueled project" whose "target is the free-enterprise, corporate-America system. I think they hate the word 'profit' and they'll do anything that will involve corporate confrontation."

Whelan also defended the safety of Alar in an op-ed piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, calling the NRDC "a litigation group, not a scientific organization," that is "partially funded by several ultraliberal foundations."

The *Journal* column carried a tag line noting that the ACSH "gets about 10 percent of its funding from pesticide producers such as Uniroyal Chemical Co., the maker of Alar." Whelan was so incensed that she wrote a second op-ed piece for the *Journal* called "When Full Disclosure Is Beside the Point."

"Why just me?" Whelan says. "Everyone who opines on the op-ed page has some ax to grind." Tim W. Ferguson, then the *Journal*'s editorial features editor, says the paper was trying to protect itself and Whelan from criticism about "perceived conflicts." But he says the tag line "ended up calling more attention to the funding problem than I would say was merited. Obviously, if we thought an author was compromised we wouldn't print the article."

Whelan is quick to charge unfair treatment. She says the *Today Show* dropped her from a scheduled debate on Alar last spring because of her industry funding. An NBC spokeswoman, however, says that Whelan had been approached because a producer mistakenly believed that the head of a group called American Council on Science and Health would

criticize Alar, and that after learning her position the show no longer needed Whelan because it already had booked a guest to defend the pesticide.

For someone who feels unfairly pummeled by questions about funding, Whelan is surprisingly willing to wield the same weapon against her adversaries. "My counterparts, why aren't they quizzed as to funding?" she says. "Why doesn't [a news report] say, 'The Natural Resources Defense Council, a group which receives substantial funding from the cigarette families, including R.J. Reynolds family foundation, said today . . . ? Who knows where else they get

ing points is that the ACSH's findings are "scientific" by virtue of having undergone "peer review" by experts drawn from the 200 scientists affiliated with the group. Whelan acknowledges, however, that these scientists generally share her views on chemical regulation. Jacobson says that many of them have served as paid consultants for industry. "They don't exactly publish [their findings] in leading scientific journals," he says. "They publish pamphlets that are reviewed by their professional cronies of the regulated industries. It's science that's forced through a sieve of conservative philosophy."



Nancy Phindrus

• I'm very proud of my relationship with corporations. I put their names all over my literature •

their funding? They don't publish their funding list on a regular basis."

In fact, the NRDC's annual report details the major sources of its \$13 million budget, including dozens of foundations, hundreds of individual contributors, and a handful of corporations, omitting only the names of 125,000 individual members for space reasons. The donor criticized by Whelan, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, is run by "second- and third-generation members of the family who choose to spend their money" on liberal causes, says NRDC administrator Patricia Sullivan.

At the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Michael Jacobson says that most of his funding comes from 180,000 dues-paying members whose names are not published for privacy reasons. A few years ago, he adds, about 5 percent of the group's \$4-million budget came from such foundations as the Arca Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, which he describes as "small liberal foundations whose money originally came from the tobacco industry. It's been sanitized by several generations. That's a very different situation from getting money from a Monsanto Fund, which is an arm of the company."

Another of Whelan's favorite debat-

Scientists are not unlike lawyers, of course, in that one can always be found to support almost any position. But why don't more scientists and corporate officials speak out in defense of controversial chemicals, rather than relying on Elizabeth Whelan to make their case? Why did most apple producers and pesticide makers shun the limelight during the Alar uproar, leaving Whelan to work the talk-show circuit? "I used to blame the media a lot, but a substantial amount of the blame is on the scientists who don't step forward," Whelan says.

Despite her high profile, Whelan portrays herself as a lonely voice in the media wilderness: "It's almost an impossible task I've taken on for myself here, to put science back in regulation."

In the end, Whelan's funding by corporate interests is a chicken-and-egg riddle. Perhaps it would be best to say that she enthusiastically embraces the chemicals-are-safe philosophy of those who happen to support her financially. People ought to know that so they can digest her views with whatever grains of salt they deem necessary. Journalists who blindly quote "experts" without illuminating their agenda are simply adding another layer of fog to an already confusing debate.

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Three years before the downfall of House Speaker Jim Wright, *The Washington Monthly* warned its readers: "If Tip O'Neill seems like the sort of guy who would write out a taxpayer endorsed check to everyone who tried to sell him swampland in Florida, Jim Wright seems more like the guy selling the land."

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OPINION

WHY THE CHEERING SHOULD STOP

BY DOUG UNDERWOOD

In recent years the once fun-and-games columns of the sports page have had to deal with a lot of less-than-fun facts of the sporting life. Drugs, gambling, player strikes, megabuck salaries, spiraling television contracts, college-rules violations, competition by the communities for professional sports teams — all have become as integral to big-time athletics as the box-scores themselves. And yet, troubled as the sports world has become, the sports page of the average newspaper is still largely a place for boosterism, where sportswriters are expected to root for the hometown heroes and criticize members of the local sports establishment only when they don't win often enough. Investigative reporting, for the most part, has been left to the hard-nosed news types covering the real world of politics and government.

A recent survey by Allen Sack, a former Notre Dame football player who is now a sociology professor at the University of New Haven, is a reminder of how little sportswriters probe behind the façade of the big-time sports programs that they largely promote. In Sack's survey of 1,182 active and retired National Football League players, nearly one-third admitted that, as so-called amateurs, they had accepted under-the-table payments in violation of National Collegiate Athletic Association guidelines,

which state that students on athletic scholarships can receive no benefits, favors, or compensation unavailable to other students. Two-thirds of the players from the Southeast Conference, for example, indicated they had accepted some form of special gratuity. "The issue today isn't whether college athletes should be paid," Sack says. "They already are."

It's fair to say that the press coverage hasn't reflected this level of corruption in university athletic programs. In recent years, some notable work has been done by Texas journalists uncovering abuses in the Southwest Athletic Conference; *The Atlanta Constitution* and *Journal* produced an impressive series detailing the relationship between sports agents and college athletes; and the Lexington, Kentucky, *Herald-Leader* tracked down ex-University of Kentucky athletes who described questionable practices in the university's basketball program (for which it was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1986). But when it comes to looking into potential abuses in their favorite college sports program, "too many sports writers are fans," says Dave Kindred, a sports columnist who has written several pieces about corruption in big-time college athletic programs. "They care more about the success of the team than the responsibilities of journalism."

My own interest in Sack's survey stems from my days as a reporter with

the Lansing, Michigan, *State Journal* in 1974-75 where, under the guidance of an unusually gutsy editor, I was assigned to investigate allegations of wrongdoing in the football recruiting practices of Michigan State University. Our reporting played a major role in NCAA sanctions barring MSU football from television and bowl appearances and contributed to a house-cleaning of the MSU athletic staff. But what I most remember about the investigation was the ease with which I mounted it. Much of my work was done the same way as Professor Sack's — simply by contacting ex-MSU players or players at other schools who had been recruited by MSU and asking them about the school's recruiting practices.

I've wondered ever since why the press doesn't do a more thorough job of probing a system that virtually everybody acknowledges — and Professor Sack's study confirms — is fraught with corruption. "It was almost shocking how willing those players were to talk," says David Green, the projects editor who oversaw the Lexington newspaper's investigation of the state university's basketball program. "It leads you to believe that those stories were out there for

**Sports
writers
are
expected
to root
for the
hometown
heroes**



Doug Underwood teaches journalism at the University of Washington in Seattle.

the telling for many years and no one was really asking."

It is highly unlikely that Kentucky is the only place where similar kinds of stories have gone begging. The traditions of sports coverage on most daily newspapers are such that the incentive to probe the practices of university athletic programs is inhibited by the prospect of traveling to bowl games, attending sports banquets, and enjoying a chummy relationship with the coaches and players. Much of what is in the sports page is more entertainment than news — and the practices of many sports reporters wouldn't pass for professionalism on the news desk. While they may no longer view their jobs as turning athletic figures into larger-than-life legends, most sportswriters write from an unabashedly home-team view. Besides, if a sportswriter helps get a team barred from post-season bowl competition, that means no trip to Miami or Pasadena or Honolulu for — guess who?

Even if a sports reporter happens to be intrepid enough to start nosing around an athletic department, he or she is likely to discover that boosterism runs deep in a community — and usually extends far into the newspaper. If the publisher or editor aren't, in fact, fans of the local team themselves, they know that most of their readers are. David Green says that after the Lexington newspaper's stories appeared, 400 readers cancelled their subscriptions, an anti-*Herald-Leader* rally was held, and a bomb threat forced the newspaper building to be cleared. "We're still hearing about it," he says. "People are still mad."

Is probing the practices of a university athletic program really worth all the trouble? As a teacher now at a major university, I know how important the football program is to satisfying the silver-haired boosters who fill the football stands — and the university's coffers. But these are also educational institutions at which we are supposed to be inculcating the young with values we wish them to carry into the world. And what the athletes too often learn these days are the virtues of deceit, hypocrisy, and greed, as well as some cynical lessons about how powerful institutions operate in our society. If this isn't a fruitful area for examination by the press, I don't know what is.

So who knows the solution? Like the boosters who often supply the illegal gratuities, many sportswriters simply rationalize the system by telling themselves that, because many of the players come from poor backgrounds, they deserve a piece of the soaring revenues that big-time athletics generate for their institutions. Even a thoughtful sports columnist like Dave Kindred believes that the NCAA rules are ludicrously complex and are there mostly to protect the school, not the student athlete. "That's why people look the other way," Kindred says. "They think the athlete is shortchanged. The rules are ignored so much that people think they're bad rules. It's like the fifty-five mile-per-hour speed limit. Nobody enforces it."

A distinct minority of university officials believe that something more than an athletic scholarship should be given to the student athletes — and particularly the poor athlete who often never graduates and, unlike other students, doesn't have time to earn money at outside jobs during the school year. In a recent op-ed piece in *The Washington Post*, William Gerberding, president of the University of Washington, suggested that it may be time to acknowledge that universities are the farm clubs for the professional leagues and to let collegiate athletes earn extra money by endorsing products and by playing in summer pro leagues.

This is clearly distasteful, however, to the vast majority of the members of the NCAA who prefer to maintain the myth of the amateurism of big-time college athletics. Professor Sack, who regards this myth of the athlete as amateur as a holdover from the Victorian era, believes it is time to pay college athletes above the table. "One of the university's roles is to debunk myths, and this system is built on one of those myths," he says.

My own suggestion would be to find ways to compel the NCAA to stop treating college sports as big business and wean itself away from big television contracts and bloated athletic-department budgets. For only by so doing can

it shore up the ethical standards of college athletics. How can the association be compelled to kick its big-bucks addiction? I submit that if the press showed a widespread determination to probe college athletics — and I think the fruits of those investigations would be easy to come by — the NCAA, university officials, and others concerned about educational values would be forced to do something to purge the hypocrisy from the present system. David Berst, the NCAA's chief enforcement officer, says that, for his part, he would welcome more diligent press examination of the practices of college athletic departments. At the same time, he believes that Sack's study exaggerates the prevalence of corruption in college sports, which Berst believes is confined to a handful of schools. Maybe it's time for the press to help find out who is right.

Fortunately, there are signs that a trend toward more aggressive coverage in sports pages — which some have seen growing over the last decade — may be accelerating. *The National*, the recently launched nationwide sports daily, plans to make investigative reporting a featured part of its news formula and has hired Kindred, as well as an investigative staff that includes Chris Mortensen, the reporter of the sports-agents series for *The Atlanta Constitution* and *Journal*; Sonny Rawls, former investigative reporter at *The New York Times*; and Jeffrey Marx, one of the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters who wrote the Lexington newspaper's articles. The *Los Angeles Times* has also recently established a sports investigative team, which includes Danny Robbins, whose probing for the *Dallas Times Herald* helped clean up some of the notoriously corrupt football programs of the Southwest Conference. "I think *The National* will be the front-runner," Marx says. "And the more papers that do it — it picks up the other papers."

Of course, no one yet knows whether *The National* will survive. But if the concept of more aggressive and more probing sports coverage does endure, that will be something of value. "I think too many sports reporters are having fun and they don't want to interrupt that," says Mortensen. "That's the way sports pages have developed. But I see things changing more and more." ♦

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How can
the NCAA
be
compelled
to kick its
big-bucks
addiction?
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JUDGMENT CALL

THE UNRULY WORLD OF BOOK REVIEWS

BY STEVE WEINBERG

Dan E. Moldea spent seven years researching and writing *Interference: How Organized Crime Influences Professional Football*. He and his publisher, William Morrow & Company, had high hopes upon the book's publication last autumn. Early reviews were good; bookstores were ordering briskly.

Within weeks, however, the orders dried up. The reason, Moldea believed: a review in the Sunday *New York Times* which said Moldea's investigation had failed because of "errors and unfounded insinuations."

The reviewer was Gerald Eskenazi, who covers professional football for the *Times*. It seemed like a sound choice.

Steve Weinberg, executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors, is a book reviewer, book editor, and an author whose books have been reviewed in many publications. He has written once for The New York Times Book Review, once for a non-book section of The Washington Post, and often for CJR, but never for any of the other publications mentioned in this article. Last year his biography of Armand Hammer was published by Little, Brown. It was reviewed favorably, by some of the publications mentioned in this article. A previous book, *Trade Secrets of Washington Journalists*, received a favorable review in The Washington Post.

Moldea thought otherwise. In the prologue to *Interference*, he had predicted that the National Football League would "send its front line of defense, the loyal sportswriters, to attack the messenger." Eskenazi, he says, was beholden to the football establishment and the *Times* should have made it clear to readers that Eskenazi covered pro football. The identification line stating that Eskenazi was a *Times* sportswriter working with baseball player Carl Yastrzemski on his autobiography was inadequate, he says.

Even worse, Moldea contends, some of Eskenazi's criticisms were inaccurate. So Moldea sent a documented complaint to Lisa Drew, his editor at Morrow. Her response: "While we are sympathetic with your distress about both the tone and the many statements and implications of inaccuracy . . . this, unfortunately, is not a unique or even rare situation; it is the risk one takes when sending a book out for review . . . It is our experience that these are basically no-win situations, and the less attention drawn to them the better . . . Virtually no book is published without a negative and often a biased, inaccurate, and unfair review, and we simply cannot go on the attack about each of these . . ."

Undeterred, Moldea wrote Eskenazi that the review had libeled him, and requested a retraction. Richard Flaste, deputy editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, discussed Moldea's complaint with *Times* lawyer David Thurm. Their first reaction, Flaste recalls, was that Moldea seemed to make compelling points about Eskenazi's alleged misreading of certain passages. Flaste says he and Thurm talked with Eskenazi, "who convinced us that the author had no ground to stand on when you examined his complaints in the context of the entire book." Their amended reaction: Eskenazi's review was fair and accurate.

In a letter to Moldea's lawyer, Thurm wrote: "Although your client may be strongly disappointed by *The New York Times* review, there is simply no basis for a correction or retraction." The newspaper did not print Moldea's letter of complaint.

Moldea is still smarting from his treatment, which he says "came at a critical time. Bookstore owners were looking for guidance as to whether to feature and

promote the book. The review so thoroughly discredited me and my book that America's booksellers backed off any support. My reputation as a responsible journalist had been badly damaged."

Such controversies are common. While a business reporter writing about a corporation is expected to be free of financial ties to it, and a city hall reporter is expected to be scrupulously nonpartisan when covering a mayoral race, ethical standards seem looser when it comes to reviewing books.

A couple of years ago, Carlin Romano of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* conducted a survey for the National Book Critics Circle. He asked its 455 members twenty-nine questions, one of which was, "Is [it] the book editor's obligation to question a prospective reviewer about potential conflicts of interest, rather than



Almost every author, agent, editor and publisher has a conspiracy theory about the *Times*'s reviews

the reviewer's to raise the subject?" Of the 122 respondents, 61 percent said the book editor should raise the question; 22 percent said it was not the editor's responsibility; 16 percent said it should be a burden shared by the editor and reviewer. Two respondents were unsure.

Overall, the results validated Romano's belief that a reviewing code of ethics is futile. "The important acts in reviewing are the private, psychological ones," Romano says. "It's a matter of integrity. You can't police the minds of reviewers and editors."

Still, some editors are searching for systematic ways to reduce conflicts. The *Los Angeles Times* discusses ethics in a

set of guidelines sent to all reviewers. "If you receive for review a book by a friend or enemy," one guideline states, "please notify the Book Review immediately. The presumption should be that you will not review the book in question. Exceptions will occasionally be made, but please do not make a silent and private exception for yourself."

Because such efforts are by their nature imperfect, conflicts of interest, real and perceived, abound. What follows is a taxonomy, with each class illustrated by one or more examples. Most of them come from *The New York Times*, which publishes more reviews than any other newspaper and whose reviews are widely perceived to have the most effect — for better or worse — on a book's prospects. Because the *Times* often uses high-visibility reviewers who know a lot of other authors, the chances for undisclosed conflicts of interest are probably greater than at other newspapers. Meanwhile, because of the perceived importance of a *Times* review, the anguish is greater when the review is unfavorable, and if the aggrieved author sees any reason to cry foul he or she probably will. In any case, almost every author, agent, editor, and publisher in the country has a conspiracy theory about the *Times*'s reviews — and *Book Review* editor Rebecca Pepper Sinkler says she spends an enormous amount of time trying to explain that there is no conspiracy.

An all-embracing heading for the following examples might well be Hidden Agendas, but within this generic grouping three subclasses come to mind.

Concealed connections

The New York Times Book Review assigned Steven Emerson's *The American House of Saud: The Secret Petrodollar Connection* to Hoyt Purvis. In the book, Emerson has a lot of unkind things to say about former U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright — for whom Purvis had worked as an aide. Although the *Times* identified Purvis as director of the Fulbright Institute at the University of Arkansas, the section's editors apparently failed to realize that the senator is one of the characters in *The House of Saud*.

Purvis dismissed Emerson's work as filled with "hype and hyperbole," criticized him for relying too heavily on sec-

ondary sources, and said the author had unfairly questioned the integrity of almost everybody who tried to deal realistically with Saudi Arabia.

When Emerson saw the section before it was distributed in the Sunday paper (it is available early in the week), he promptly complained to *Times* editors. The *Times* published an Editors' Note in the A section of the Sunday paper which mentioned that Purvis had worked for Fulbright, adding, "The *Times* does not knowingly assign such book reviews to anyone who has had close ties with anyone who is prominently mentioned in the book . . ." Two weeks later, the *Times* published a letter from Emerson, in which, after noting that his text contained ten pages of negative references to Fulbright, Emerson wrote: "Mr. Purvis unfortunately allowed his biases to distort and misrepresent my book."

'It's better to risk a hostile review than an uninformed one'

The following week the *Times* published a second review of Emerson's work — this time on the daily book page. This review, by diplomatic correspondent Bernard Gwertzman, was also negative.

Emerson was angry, he says, but decided that further protest was futile. Purvis, for his part, says he felt he had been ill used: after all, the *Times* had asked him to write a review and when he accepted the assignment he was unaware that the book contained references to Fulbright. When Purvis saw them, he never flinched. "I wasn't mentioned myself, and the senator wasn't a major figure," Purvis says. "I hadn't even the slightest hesitation about my objectivity."

What really intrigued Purvis, though, was the choice of Gwertzman to do the second review. Gwertzman had written a biography of Fulbright with the senator's cooperation, a connection undisclosed in the reviewer's identification line.

In a recent interview, Gwertzman said

that the Fulbright connection never came up when he received the review assignment, adding that his having written the biography seventeen years earlier had no effect on his judgment and that he had gotten the review assignment before the Purvis review was published. (Emerson says that he was unaware of the Gwertzman-Fulbright connection until this reporter brought it to his attention.)

Times Book Review editor Sinkler says that this and similar incidents led her to instruct her editors to ask of potential reviewers: "Is there any reason the author would object to you?"

Robert Herzstein's book about the questionable past of Kurt Waldheim, *Waldheim: The Missing Years*, contains a single neutral reference to Shirley Hazzard — hardly the sort of thing that, by itself, would raise doubts about the propriety of assigning the review to Hazzard.

But Hazzard had written about Waldheim herself, notably in a 1980 *New Republic* article described by the *Times Book Review*, in the line identifying her, as the "first statement of Kurt Waldheim's concealed past."

Furthermore, Hazzard had read a segment of an early draft of the Herzstein manuscript at the request of the publisher. Allan Mayer, Herzstein's editor, recalls that Hazzard "wrote a long and generally hostile critique. The main source of her animus seemed to be that Professor Herzstein hadn't given her credit" for the important material in her *New Republic* article. "In my view," Mayer says, "this grievance so colored her view of Professor Herzstein's work that, despite her impressive literary and journalistic credentials, there was no point" in continuing to use her expertise on this particular book.

In her review, Hazzard praised Herzstein for researching such an important topic, but criticized the book as "ill written, at times obtuse and often trivial."

Mayer wrote a letter to the *Times*, which was not published. In due course — six weeks after the appearance of the review — the *Times* did publish a letter from Herzstein, in which he referred to Hazzard's hostile in-house critique and to Mayer's belief that her hostility was linked to Herzstein's failure to give credit to her *New Republic* reporting. He went on to explain that his failure to do



so reflected his belief that she had not gotten her facts straight.

Since then, Hazzard has written again about Waldheim, for *The New Yorker*. A book based on her articles is scheduled for publication in April. Regarding her recent experience as a book reviewer, Hazzard says it was "so unpleasant that I haven't reviewed a book since nor will I in the foreseeable future."

The National Book Critics Circle survey had such situations in mind when it asked, "Should a book editor assign a book on subject A to a reviewer who has also written a book on subject A, or a subject extremely close to that?" Seventy-nine of the respondents said yes. Their comments included, "Who would be more interested in and knowledgeable of the subject?" and, "It's better to risk a hostile review than an uninformed one."

Natural enemies

Robert Sam Anson believes that the *Washington Journalism Review* set up his *War News: A Young Reporter in Indochina* for a slam by assigning it to Richard Krolik, identified by the magazine as "retired from promotional and producing stints at Time-Life and NBC." The book covers the years Anson worked for *Time*. In a letter published in *WJR*, Anson asked why the editors had selected "a retired flack for Time Inc., a choice that, given my employment history and the book's subject, is roughly the equivalent of asking Nora Ephron to review Carl Bernstein."

Bill Monroe, *WJR*'s editor, says he chose Krolik, a long-time acquaintance, because "I had no doubt in my mind that he would be fair."

This magazine, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, chose Fred Barnes to review *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*, by Mark Hertsgaard. In the book, Barnes is mentioned twice in passing — once in the text, where he is described as a "pro-Reagan columnist"; once in a footnote. The review was hostile, beginning: "This is a tirade against the mainstream press that reinforces a myth."

In a letter to CJR, Hertsgaard complained about alleged "numerous dubious assertions and distortions" and omissions of important facts. "To think Barnes would give any sort of illuminating review was a bad call," Hertsgaard says.

Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, recalls that at first there had been discussion about whether the book should be reviewed at all in view of the fact that its basic argument would be familiar to the magazine's readers. The bibliography, she points out, cites a number of CJR pieces whose thesis was similar to Hertsgaard's. "When we chose Barnes," Cooper says, "we expected the review to be provocative, but we assumed it would be fair. We had problems with its hostile tone and the treatment of Hertsgaard's evidence. Several changes were made in consultation with Barnes, but CJR traditionally allows reviewers considerable latitude in the

expression of their opinions."

Hertsgaard's views about the Washington media showed through shortly thereafter, when he trashed *The Acting President*, about the Reagan years, by CBS correspondent Bob Schieffer and Gary Paul Gates. Reviewing it for *The Washington Post*, Hertsgaard wondered "whether a book of such awesome mediocrity would have been published at all if its authors weren't well-known journalists . . . With its . . . relentless eschewing of any but the most noncontroversial points of view, it is distressingly reminiscent of the very kind of Washington-insider journalism that did so little to expose the true nature of Reaganism at the time it mattered most." Schieffer says that he was "stunned" by the choice of reviewer, but that he did not complain to the *Post*.

One reader who did complain was Cholly Angeleno, who writes for the *West Coast Review of Books*. "Aw c'mon," he wrote, "who's the guy who chose the author of *On Bended Knee* . . . to do the review of *The Acting President*? . . . Reminds me of the time that Police Chief Ed Davis of L.A. wrote the review of the Patty Hearst book when he was the guy who burned the house where he thought Patty was staying."

Nina King, *The Washington Post*'s book editor, says she assigned the review to Hertsgaard believing something interesting might result. "I don't think you have to search for reviewers who have no opinions," she says. "That could lead to bland pages." She adds that she does not suggest that a review be negative; her desire is to find a reviewer "sympathetic" to the topic.

Turf warriors

USA Today book editor Robert Wilson assigned Myra MacPherson's *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation* to Christopher Buckley — because, Wilson says, he had been impressed by a magazine article on "Viet Guilt" that Buckley had written.

Hearing of the assignment, MacPherson and her publisher complained that Buckley, whom MacPherson had interviewed, was described in the book as a draft dodger caught up after the fact in "Viet Guilt chic." Buckley had told Wilson that he was mentioned in the book, Wilson says, adding that this did not in-

duce him to change his mind about the assignment.

The review called MacPherson's book "a bit pathetic . . . silly . . . sloppy." Wilson ran it, but published a sidebar that said MacPherson and her publisher had raised questions about Buckley's suitability as a reviewer. In retrospect, Wilson says, "There are times you can bend the rules a bit if you're upfront about it."

Roger Kahn skewered Daniel Okrent's baseball book *Nine Innings* in *The New York Times Book Review*. Questioning the importance of the major league game Okrent chose to recap, Kahn noted that Okrent "has difficulties with detail, pace, and even words. He soon had me rooting for rain."

Nowhere did Kahn mention that his baseball novel, *The Seventh Game*, had been panned in the same pages less than three years earlier — by Okrent, who called it "flat, sloppy, and pointless."

Okrent wrote a complaint which the *Times* did not publish. *Times* editors agree, however, that Kahn should not have received the assignment.

Jack Holland gave a mixed notice in

The New York Times Book Review to *Father and Son*, Peter Maas's novel about life in Northern Ireland. Maas is best known as an investigative reporter, and Holland wrote that this nonfiction background was apparent: "Mr. Maas is not at his best when doing the novelist's job — creating character and the relationships that bring that character dramatically to life. Perhaps this explains why *Father and Son* reads only partly as if it were fiction."

The *Times* identified Holland as the author of *The American Connection: U.S. Guns, Money, and Influence in Northern Ireland*. *Times* editors learned after the Sunday book section had been distributed that Maas, two years earlier, had given *The American Connection* a tepid review. There was still time, however, to insert an Editors' Note in the Sunday A section of the paper stating that Maas's review in *The Nation* "was mixed, and was followed by an exchange . . . Mr. Holland called parts of Mr. Maas's essay 'boring and rather childish' . . . Mr. Maas likened Mr. Holland's reaction to those of pro-British fanatics in Ulster. The *Times* does

not knowingly assign a book review to anyone who is an adversary of the author. It was unaware of the background in this case."

It is a truism that no two reviewers read the same book in the same way. Study enough reviews of any given book and you will find wildly contradictory judgments. In the end, many of the disputes over "fairness" and "ethics" are clashes of opinion, pure and simple, as when Jessica Mitford questioned what she believed to be Elinor Langer's distorted look at Carl Bernstein's *Loyalties* in *The New York Times Book Review*. In a letter to the *Times*, Mitford said she admired Langer's own books but contended that her review showed poor judgment. Mitford concluded her letter on a note of regret: "Elinor, I hardly knew ye!"

Langer's reply, which followed Mitford's letter, read: "As someone who regards Jessica Mitford as a national treasure, I can only say that the Bernstein family is very fortunate to have her as a friend. The book she describes sounds wonderful, and I'm sure if I had read it I would have liked it too." ♦



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BOOKS

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

BY JON KATZ

"Just let me get my hands on enough velvet and chromium," Jerry Oppenheimer quotes Barbara Walters's father as once saying, "and I will build nightclubs like the world has never seen before, luxury like the Roman emperors never dreamed of."

Lou Walters, who operated New York's famous Latin Quarter as well as

**BARBARA WALTERS:
AN UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY**
BY JERRY OPPENHEIMER
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS. 352 PP. \$19.95

clubs in Miami and Boston, never quite fulfilled his grandiose fantasies, ending his life in financial trouble. His career as a nightclub "impresario" was cut short, at least in part, by the fact that millions of Americans were staying home to watch the new medium in which his daughter had found work. Lou Walters never got his hands on enough velvet and chromium, but his daughter did. And she knew what to do with it.

Jerry Oppenheimer embraces the premise that the key to understanding Barbara Walters, co-anchor of ABC News's *20/20* and broadcasting's most famous celebrity interviewer, lies in a lonely childhood (she did her homework at her father's nightclubs). She grew up in a troubled family, including a retarded sister, that was headed by nomadic, debt-ridden parents and was enmeshed in the celebrity trappings of the nightclub

Jon Katz, a former executive producer of the CBS Morning News and a former managing editor of the Dallas Times Herald, teaches journalism at New York University.

world. It was there that she learned, Oppenheimer suggests, "to keep her feelings inside; not to wear her heart on her sleeve."

Oppenheimer also hints that her father set the tone for Walters's lifelong pattern of involvement with flamboyant, sometimes shadowy, generally controversial men — from her current husband, television producer Merv Adelson, to ex-McCarthy aide Roy Cohn, a longtime close friend. She also showed considerable skill at befriending other powerful men in public life to considerable advantage, from the ubiquitous Henry Kissinger, who seems to have a fondness for people who anchor television programs, to Richard Nixon to Anwar Sadat, whom she persuaded to sit down with Menachem Begin for an extraordinary television interview following the Camp David accords.

How did she do it? If the dozens of

former colleagues and associates quoted by Oppenheimer are to be believed, she did it by working like a demon, building on the social contacts that came to her through her father and her work, sacrificing her personal life, befriending powerful network executives, politicking like a ward heeler, and never taking no for an answer. Even in television terms, that degree of focused ambition stands out.

Near the beginning of Nixon's term, Dan Rather arrived early to stake out a prime spot at a church the new president-elect was planning to attend. Rather, known for his fierce competitiveness, was unnerved to notice an intruder who "wriggled through the crowd, straightened up out of a kind of Vietnamese crouch, and stepped on my new shoes." As it turned out, Walters got the spot she wanted and Rather's new shoes were ruined. So it has gone.



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Michelle Vranian Rafter
The Orange County Register

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"On the job," says Oppenheimer, "Barbara was driven, compulsive, a perfectionist." Adds Shad Northshield, former executive producer of NBC's *Huntley-Brinkley Report* and one of Walters's early bosses, "She came along when television news discovered the need for, or a desire for, a woman and she was enough of a journalist, and enough of a performer, and at the right place, and certainly at the right time, to become well known."

Walters was a master at high-impact celebrity journalism from the beginning. Her exclusive interview with Nixon in March 1971 on the *Today Show* — granted, according to Oppenheimer, because Nixon felt safe with Barbara asking the questions — was a major career breakthrough, though it was also a carefully rehearsed showcase for the president. So was another exclusive, with H.R. Haldeman, during preparations for which, according to Oppenheimer, Walters playfully put her powder puff in Haldeman's mouth.

Walters was lucky: her gift for getting celebrities to talk coincided with radical changes in television. When the people running television networks stopped exempting their news divisions from ratings and profit pressure, news had to compete with *Wheel of Fortune* and *Dallas*. So personalities like Walters, who generates huge audiences and revenues by delivering celebrities like Streisand, Stallone, and Donna Rice, have grown in importance.

Walters is of historic importance to broadcast news as well. When she signed a million-dollar contract to join ABC News in 1976 as co-anchor of *ABC Evening News*, she not only became the first female anchor of a national news broadcast, but she also inaugurated a new era for television's news anchors. Already walking a fine line between journalism and stardom, anchors moved closer to Hollywood notions of stardom. Anchor salaries skyrocketed, as did anchor influence on content. Programs like CBS's *Saturday Night With Connie Chung* and *48 Hours* and ABC's *Prime Time Live* were created as lures for other networks' stars or as showcases for expensive anchors already on hand, not as broadcasts driven by particular editorial values. Anchors have gained corporate power as well, negotiating for prime-

time pilots, documentary hours, and election-night roles. They increasingly dominate major stories, often pushing young correspondents and veteran reporters off the air during stories like the California earthquake or the revolution sweeping over Eastern Europe.

Walters's pairing with Harry Reasoner turned out to be a disaster; many viewers, television critics, and colleagues refused to take her seriously. Although her stint on the evening news was cut mercifully short, it led to a different kind of success. She turned away from enterprising news interviews like Sadat-Begin and toward her heavily promoted celebrity specials.

Yet Walters, in a way typical of broadcast journalism's superstars, clings to the notion of herself as a journalist, even though most reporters' salaries wouldn't cover her limo bills. At the end

**In a way typical of TV
superstars, Walters
clings to
a notion of herself
as a journalist**

of *Barbara Walters: An Unauthorized Biography*, Oppenheimer quotes his subject describing how she wants to be remembered: "I think, professionally, as a good journalist."

She is unlikely to see that ambition fulfilled. She was well known in Washington as friendly to the Nixon White House, according to Oppenheimer. In 1976, she pleaded on the air with President-elect Jimmy Carter to "be wise with us, Governor, be good to us." In 1979, she helped the Cuban Mission in New York prepare a party for President Fidel Castro, acting as co-host and helping select guest journalists. In 1987, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Iranian businessman Manucher Ghorbanifar had used Walters as a secret conduit to pass on to President Reagan "his views about U.S. arms sales to Iran."

By 1989, a month after she wished to be remembered as a professional journalist, she had abandoned journalistic pretense completely: "Didn't she always

look and behave just right?" Walters cooed, presenting an award to Nancy Reagan at a fashion industry gala last January and defending the First Lady's garment "borrowing," according to *The Washington Post*. "Weren't we always so proud?"

The origins of this split personality — the journalist, by definition an outsider, and the insider who desperately wants powerful friends — are suggested in Oppenheimer's interviews with scores of people who roomed near Walters, dated her, befriended her, or observed her. He meticulously documents the trivial gleamings and episodes of her early life.

In 1944, for example, when the Walters family was living in Miami Beach, Barbara had entered tenth grade and, according to Oppenheimer, wanted to join Kappa Pi, one of her school's most coveted sororities. Kappa leaders, meeting in secret, turned her down. Oppenheimer presents this most common of adolescent experiences as devastating for Walters.

Oppenheimer also describes Walters's preoccupation with the main ingredients of life among Manhattan's Upper East Side elite — social climbing, career obsession, and materialism. While her fellow students at Sarah Lawrence were out battling McCarthyism, says Oppenheimer, Walters was out shopping.

Oppenheimer sets alarm bells ringing about his sense of proportion in his preface, when he describes Walters as "an icon" who "has reached that pinnacle of fame where her name has been indelibly etched alongside those of Jackie O., Monroe, Presley, Carson, Hope, Taylor, Hepburn. Like them, she is a legend in her own time." Most of these comparisons are ridiculously inflated — fans seem unlikely to make her Fifth Avenue co-op a shrine on a par with Grace-land. Oppenheimer's need to puff up his subject shakes his credibility from the start. And his prose ranges from clunky to dreadful. "But the bells never rang for Barbara and Sy," he writes of one ill-fated relationship.

The bells never ring for readers who want to understand what Barbara Walters's life adds up to, either. Oppenheimer sees no need to put things in perspective. He declines to explore her impact on journalism in much depth. He is particularly sketchy about her recent

years at ABC, where she was enthroned as the reigning monarch of celebrity journalism. Anchors can make or break their colleagues' careers as well as those of their subjects; only those long left behind, apparently, felt safe in talking.

The real question that nags is, Do we really need all those personal details about Barbara Walters? She doesn't seem a large enough figure to carry all that freight. Oppenheimer tells us more than we care to know about her psyche, her high school dates, and her workplace squabbles, but he doesn't delve deeply

into the part of her life that is truly extraordinary — the way in which she helped create monster anchors and symbolized the turn of broadcast news toward celebrity.

Perhaps if we understood Walters's sad evolution from a journalist with the power to bring warring heads of state into the same room to a celebrity willing to take up residence in Nancy Reagan's cheering section, we would understand more of the similar fate that has befallen so much of television news programming.

THE HOUSE-TRAINED PRESS

BY DAVID AARON

American democracy is increasingly befooled by the spread of so-called "negative campaigning," mudslinging raised to the level of a science by polling and by focus groups. Not only are the most important issues lost in the din of invective, but, worse, negative campaigning works. Timothy E. Cook's new book, *Making Laws and Making News*, shows why: the press is not doing its job. Coverage of office holders is so weak and lacking in insight that the first critical thing that most voters hear about an incumbent comes from advertising. Ignorant of the facts on most issues, voters are forced to choose on the emotional level established by the negative campaign.

Cook's scholarly analysis of the dance involving the press and the U.S. House of Representatives could be applied to almost every level of American politics. He concludes that the Capitol Hill press corps is remarkably passive, favors incumbents, and therefore is exploited by press strategies on the part of office holders that emphasize bland "name recognition" stories over issues and by campaigns that count on the media's "benign neglect" of challengers. As a result, in our land of democracy, almost

99 percent of all incumbents are re-elected to the House of Representatives — a record that must be envied in totalitarian backwaters like Albania and North Korea.

Making Laws and Making News is essentially a textbook, more readable than most, and should become a bible for all those aspiring to become press secretaries on Capitol Hill. The author, a political science professor at Williams

**MAKING LAWS AND MAKING NEWS:
MEDIA STRATEGIES IN THE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
BY TIMOTHY E. COOK
BROOKINGS. 210 PP. \$26.95

College and a former congressional fellow, has even thoughtfully included a press secretary's job description as an appendix. Journalists, too, would be well advised to read the book for its incisive description of how the routines and requirements of their profession are exploited by politicians for their own purposes.

Beginning with a brief history of the press in Washington, D.C., the book contains colorful stories of the uneasy and sometimes unpleasant relationship between congressmen and the press. In 1846, for instance, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* printed the following description of Ohio Democrat William

David Aaron is an author and a former member of the White House and congressional staffs. His most recent novel is Agent of Influence.

Sawyer, who ate a sausage on the House floor each day at two o'clock.

What little grease is left on his hands he wipes on his almost bald head which saves any outlay for Pomatum. His mouth sometimes serves as a finger glass, his coat sleeves and pantaloons being called into requisition as a napkin. He uses a jackknife for a toothpick, and then he goes on the floor again to abuse the Whigs as the British party.

Sawyer managed to have the *Tribune* expelled from the House, but Cook reports that the journalists had their revenge: "Sausage" Sawyer took his nickname to the grave.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the role of the media in the legislative process, focusing in particular on the tension between the need to use the media to attract attention to a problem, and the need to avoid the press while the solution is being worked out. Cook quotes one press secretary as saying, "Before legislative action, you want . . . to generate public attention and public interest. Then you get to actually legislating and putting the pieces of the puzzle together, and you don't want it; you've got every-

thing cranked up and then a story in the Post can kill you"

From my own experience as a staff member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, his analysis rings true. For years, the U.S. intelligence agencies had operated without adequate congressional oversight, and the result was a horrendous but secret record of abuses and failures. Nothing could be done about it until Seymour Hersh in *The New York Times* broke the story that the CIA had been keeping files on thousands of Americans. Then a select committee was set up and Senator Frank Church chosen to head it.

The staff began a careful examination of the issues in order to develop reforms, but Church swept that aside. Instead, he brought in a posse of prosecutors and put on a series of spectacular hearings on CIA assassination plots. The continuing public attention built further momentum for reform, but the sight of Senator Church, who was running for president, waving a poison dart gun on TV threatened to undermine the credibility of the committee and everyone on it. Only when Church went off to the

campaign could the committee settle down in obscurity and write some sensible proposals for reform.

Making Laws and Making News contains three case studies contrasting two styles of congressional leadership: the oldboy ("inside") style, in which legislators avoid the press, and the modern ("outside") style, in which legislators use the media to build up public pressure on an issue to enhance their political position. The studies cover the rise of mediagenic Representative Les Aspin to become the old-boy chair of the armed services committee; the transformation of tough-talking old-boy Dan Rostenkowski into a media star and manipulator; the effort of Representative Don Pease to keep the persistent problem of unemployment before the public despite the media's aversion to covering what it considers an old story. "Political news is like crime news," Cook says, quoting another author. "It's about what went wrong today, not what goes wrong every day."

Cook's book is full of surprising insights. Congressmen value local news coverage over national press attention. They prefer print to TV because newspapers are more likely to simply publish a handout while television goes in one eye and out the other. Most voters reject an incumbent for a reason, so all media strategies are aimed at building name recognition but not defining the office holder too clearly. Hence the rise of negative campaigns aimed at "defining the opponent."

On one level, Cook's analysis is obvious: legislation is politics and the press is an essential part of the political process. But he tells an interesting insider's story of how the process works and raises a number of troubling questions about the news media's self-righteousness and sloth. "Often the media's role in the political process," he writes, "is akin to recirculating air in a building with no windows."

Do the requirements of the media distort the legislative process? In my experience, yes, but no more so than personal ambition. I believe that most legislators would agree with Barney Frank, who was a widely respected "inside" legislator before the recent revelations about his personal conduct turned him into a media figure. Timothy Cook

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quotes him as writing in 1987, ". . . my votes in Washington are based mostly on my view of what is good public policy, and not greatly on what I think my reelection requires." And Frank concluded with a statement that, in retrospect, seems sadly ironic: "Where reelection comes in is not in how I decide what to do, but in how I decide which of my activities to give the most publicity."

CALL THEM ISHMAEL

BY TIMOTHY NOAH

One of the odder news stories to rivet the nation's attention in recent years was the saga of three great whales that became trapped under the polar ice pack in October 1988. The whales had waited too long to begin their annual migration from Alaska to Mexico. To breathe, they poked their heads through the ice, creating sort of a fishing hole in reverse. Spouting there, the whales were discovered first by an Eskimo from nearby Barrow, and subsequently by the news media, which turned the whales' plight into a major national story.

It goes without saying that the whale story was trivial (though probably no less trivial than the pledge of allegiance, Willie Horton, and other issues dominating the news that fall). But it was also commonplace. Whales suffer and die all the time. Some are killed by hunters, in Alaska and elsewhere, who operate under a legal quota system established by the International Whaling Commission. Others get eaten by great white sharks. And still others get trapped under ice; their carcasses wash up along the Arctic coast every spring. What was unique about these three whales was that they got stranded close to the shore, where their agony could be observed by man. In other words, there were visuals.

The story began as an AP wire item in the *Anchorage Daily News*, and even-

tually got major play in newspapers of the Lower Forty-eight. But its natural habitat was obviously television. By chance, the Alaska oil boom of the 1970s had left a sophisticated satellite transmission facility near Barrow's Wiley Post Airport. The earth station had been left unused in the ten years it had sat there; the last event in Barrow of any interest to the outside world had occurred in 1935, when Wiley Post and Will Rogers died in a plane crash a few miles to the south. When the director of Barrow's local television studio beamed some heart-rending videotape down to the NBC affiliate in Anchorage, the footage was picked up by *NBC Nightly News* for a human-interest kicker, provoking a flood of phone calls from concerned viewers. In response, one hundred and fifty journalists from around the globe poured into tiny Barrow — one reporter for every seventeen residents. Within three days, the story was leading all three networks.

Freeing the Whales provides ample evidence that satellite technology is a mixed blessing to the news business, increasing the reach of both real news and non-events that momentarily capture the public's imagination. Partly because Barrow is so remote, and partly because Barrow's Eskimo inhabitants, though generous in volunteering time and effort to the rescue, demonstrated a unique gift

for extorting the press — they charged up to \$400 to transport reporters to or from the whales by dogsled — what came to be known as Operation Breakout was a preposterously expensive story. TV camera crews, and government and corporate rescuers largely inspired by their presence, ended up spending more than \$5 million dollars.

Is it self-righteous for me to wonder why that money wasn't spent investigating, say, the scandals at the Department of Housing and Urban

FREED THE WHALES: HOW THE MEDIA CREATED THE WORLD'S GREATEST NON-EVENT

BY TOM ROSE
BIRCH LANE PRESS 318 PP. \$18.95

Development, whose ramifications included the stranding of hundreds of thousands of homeless homo sapiens? Granted the visuals on that story no longer have much novelty — grizzled hobos on subway grates, families sleeping in automobiles, etc. Still, I like to think people are more important than whales — especially when the whales are threatened not by man but by nature. Covering HUD would have certainly been much safer. Judging from this book, it's a near-miracle that the media circus led to no human deaths by heli-



Timothy Noah is a Washington writer.

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Donna A. Demac
Foreword by Larry McMurtry
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copter crash, cracking ice floes, or hungry polar bears (which freely roam the streets of Barrow).

Unfortunately for the author, a freelance TV reporter, the same logic that made the whale story seem overblown on the evening news makes it rather thin gruel for a book. To pull it off, a writer would need a deft, ironic touch; instead, Rose goes in for denunciations of the media that appear less than heartfelt. Rose was hired by a Japanese TV network to do stories about the American press's bizarre antics in Barrow, but he obviously had trouble getting any emotional distance. The bulk of his narrative skimps on the press angle and focuses breathlessly on the story of the whales and their rescue. None of the book's central characters is a reporter; Rose even keeps himself largely invisible.

I suppose Rose would answer that the press's mere presence drove the rescue story, which is certainly true. Its reach was awesome. As the book points out, environmentalists exploited news of the whales to bring a newly elected Icelandic government to the verge of collapse because it would not ban whaling. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union, which kills more gray whales than any other country on earth, buffed its environmental image by providing two icebreaking vessels to complete the rescue. An oil supply company that volunteered hundreds of thousands of dollars to help free the whales reaped such favorable publicity that it subsequently won a multimillion dollar contract to clean up Exxon's Alaska oil spill. And in Washington, the young White House aide in charge of keeping Ronald Reagan up to date about the whales fell in long-distance love with her contact, a recently divorced colonel in the Alaska National Guard. The two were later married.

And the whales? Two of them lived long enough to swim out to open sea, but in their fatigued and bloodied condition it's unlikely that they survived the ice floes, sharks, and other perils awaiting them on their southward migration. If they did live, they will probably pass on those faulty genes that got them stranded in the first place, weakening the species. None of this will be observable by humans, however, so by the logic of TV news judgment it doesn't matter. No pictures, no story. ♦

SHORT TAKES

DIFFERENT STAGES

Herzl's initiation into the jungle of French politics was the daily session of the Chamber of Deputies he attended at the Palais Bourbon. It was a not unfamiliar territory, a giant stage on which 533 actors of widely varying ability participated in a virtually uninterrupted spectacle oscillating constantly between high drama and low farce. As a critic of this kind of theater, he could sum up mood, scenery, and action within a paragraph or two, but it was the actors on whom he lavished his main attention. In a curious reversal he, who had never been able to breathe life into any of his own creations, displayed an uncanny knack for pen portraits that caught the very essence of a French politician and made him palpably real to the readers back home. And where, as a playwright, he had squandered his irony in labored witticisms, he now used it to deflate grandiloquence and absurdity. By thus following his natural bent, he came up with an approach to political journalism that quickly won him a personal following and boosted the standing of *Neue Freie Presse*.

Contents aside, what distinguished his work was the writing itself. The unaccustomed constraints of space and time taught him to pare his style down to essentials without sacrificing the polished prose that had always been his pride. No story of his ever went back to Vienna unless and until it satisfied his own standards, more rigorous even than those of the *Presse*'s perfectionist editors, so that in the end he had Bacher begging for mercy: "The main thing is food for the wide-open maws of curiosity," the editor wrote to him in 1892. "If there is no time to bake, then for God's sake send the raw ingredients, no matter how raw."



**FROM THE LABYRINTH OF EXILE:
A LIFE OF THEODOR HERZL**
BY ERNST PAWEI

FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX. 554 PP. \$30

OUR DAILY DADA

[Philosophical] speculations have no place in a paper like ours. It can be plausibly maintained, however, that the whole tendency of our paper and of others like it, with their crazy headlines and absurdist stories, is the defiance of reason. Our readers are excited by such headlines as these:

BOY, ELEVEN, MAKES FIVE BABYSITTERS PREGNANT

OR MOM DELIVERS FOUR-POUND PEARL

or, one of my favorites, DID LIBERACE'S DOGS HAVE AIDS?

What do these stories mean — if anything? They must mean something! It can't be that huge numbers of people in this age of polyurethane are devotees of surrealism or Dadaism, or whatever the right label is for the passion to make the grotesque chic. Is it not rather the case that these ridiculous stories are demonstrations, every one of them, that all things are possible? And are they not also suggestions that it is therefore pointless to try to fathom the mind of God?

It is an intellectual nihilism, one of the odd consequences of which is that the stupidest person you know is suddenly promoted to be the equal of the smartest. There is, at the checkout lines of every supermarket in America, an assertion of a new kind of democracy, the democracy of intellect, for if nothing makes sense, then the thoughtful person's ability to make some sense of some things is only a useless and irrelevant game. Or, worse, a fatal delusion.

What good is intelligence in the face of such declarations as HIPPO EATS CIRCUS DWARF where there is no possible reply except "Wow!"?

FROM *LIVES OF THE SAINTS*

A NOVEL BY DAVID R. SLAVITT. ATHENEUM. 213 PP. \$19.95

SECOND-STORY NEWSMAN

Hecht's first job on the *Journal* was as a picture chaser, an extinct type of newspaperman whose sole justification lay in his ability to beg, borrow, or most often steal photos of recently murdered, raped, divorced, or otherwise newsworthy people. Hecht's Aunt Chasha sewed large pockets in the lining of his coat to conceal his newly acquired burglar tools as well as stolen photographs. Hecht's friend Charles Samuels recalled that Hecht "clambered up fire escapes, crawled through windows and transoms, posing when detected as everything from a gas meter inspector to an undertaker's assistant. In a short while he was recognized as the most adept and audacious picture thief in Chicago. He seldom failed to return from his missions with photographs snatched from the walls, bureau drawers, mantelpieces of the homes of killers, brides jilted at the altar, suicides, eloping couples, and accident victims." Once Hecht was chased all the way to the *Journal* by an irate woman with a gun. Another time, city editor Dunne reprimanded him for stealing a four-by-four-foot oil painting of a murder victim — the only likeness he could find — but rewarded his zeal with a raise.

Scooping all the other papers in town, Hecht reached the peak of his picture-chasing career a year and a half after he began. A double suicide involving a seventeen-year-old girl and a minister was inflaming the public, but no paper could get a photo of the girl because her mother refused to talk to the press. Hecht waited outside her house for ten hours one winter day till all the reporters and other picture chasers had given up, then he climbed to the roof and capped the chimney with boards. When the girl's mother burst from the smoke-filled house, Hecht slipped into the living room and snatched a photo. As a result of this derring-do, Walter Howey, editor of William Randolph Hearst's *Chicago Examiner*, tried to lure him over to his paper, but Hecht loyally remained with the *Journal*. Money had not yet begun to matter.

FROM *BEN HECHT*

BY WILLIAM MACADAMS. CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS. 384 PP. \$22.50



Shirer and Murrow at CBS

MURROW CHOOSES SIDES

I was beginning to see that Paley could not forgive me for having crossed him. [Shirer had refused to move to Chicago to do a news and comment program sponsored by Wrigley chewing gum, the largest advertisers on CBS.] You did not do that to the chairman of the board of a big corporation. For a day or two perhaps he had hesitated until he saw whether Murrow would be loyal to him and the company or to an old friend. Now that Ed had made it clear where he stood, Paley did not hesitate. He would show me the cost of insubordination.

And he would put out of his mind, as the imperious Colonel McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune* had done fifteen years before, as all the great American tycoons did, any thought of the services one had rendered the company over the years, the risks a foreign correspondent had taken to get the news, to cover the war, the lack of normal personal and family life, the long hours of toil seven days a week, week after week, month after month, the prestige one had brought the organization by one's work, the loyalty and devotion one had showed it. I shouldn't have been surprised. I'd been through it all before with Colonel McCormick, as had so many of my colleagues with their respective press lords. Bill Paley was just another one of the breed. With Ed Murrow, of course, it was different. I was still baffled by his behavior.

FROM *20TH CENTURY JOURNEY: A NATIVE'S RETURN, 1945-1988*

BY WILLIAM L. SHIRER
LITTLE, BROWN. 484 PP. \$24.95

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LETTERS

GETTING OFF THE FAST TRACK

◆ I read with much amusement the article on downward mobility in our profession (CJR, November/December), since my wife and I are about seven years ahead of the trend.

I spent sixteen years on the fast track in Houston; first I worked on one of the dailies, then as editor of a national magazine, and finally as a free-lancer. After running the race that long, we decided the big prizes weren't worth it. The rats were winning.

First we moved to a medium-sized town, where I worked as a copy editor on a small daily; then we scaled down even more, when I moved on to work as publisher of two weeklies in South Texas. It's amazing to discover how much of the big-city living we don't miss.

I work just as hard as I did in the big city to give our readers the best possible newspaper, and my wife — who prepares all the ads — and I make just as much money. But it goes much farther. In the city we certainly couldn't buy our modest home on two acres for \$26,000 where we can raise our organic garden or go fishing in the lake five minutes away. What's more, we have the time to enjoy each other's company, time we never had on the fast track.

TEX ROGERS

PUBLISHER, THE EDNA HERALD
EDNA, TEX.

HALBERSTAM ON RENATA ADLER'S REPORTING

◆ Tom Morgan is right to criticize John Scanlon, charming though Scanlon is supposed to be, for his work as a p.r. man (Letters, CJR, November/December). He is wrong, however, to celebrate in the same letter to CJR Renata Adler's coverage of the Westmoreland trial in *The New Yorker*. Because *The New Yorker* for some quaint reason does not print letters, her work largely es-

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the May/June issue, letters should be received by March 20. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

caped public criticism at the time. Now at this late date to find it praised in a respected journalism review by a man with Tom Morgan's reputation is completely unacceptable. To some of us who covered the war and were offended by CBS's violations of traditional journalistic procedures there was something equally disturbing about Adler's own reporting — in the way her fury at CBS blinded her to the fact that the documentary, flawed though it was in some ways, contained some brilliant reporting on the nature of truth in Vietnam. Her biased coverage of the trial, her condescension towards Lieutenant Colonel Gains Hawkins in particular, and her distorted coverage of his testimony diminished the worth of her reporting far more than anything John Scanlon could ever hope to do.

The conflict between Hawkins, the intelligence officer in charge of enemy estimates, and Westmoreland, the American commander, cut to the very heart of a controversy that has raged from the early days of the Vietnam War to the very end, and, indeed, continues to this day. It was, and is, a controversy about truth in the war, and while it was often billed as a press battle — that is, the journalists on one side and a monolithic military establishment on the other — it was, as the Westmoreland trial revealed, a battle within the military bureaucracy between the very top on one side and the middle and lower levels on the other. Those who covered the war dealt often with lower-level and middle-level officers who were candid and pessimistic about events but whose reports were systematically distorted by the most senior figures in Saigon in order to make the prosecution of the war look more successful than it was. Hawkins was the man with what is these days called the smoking gun, the middle-level officer who, at the trial, told in great detail how the process of distortion actually worked and how truths were turned into lies, not by others acting in Westmoreland's name, but by Westmoreland himself.

Hawkins's estimates of enemy forces in mid-1987 showed that we had not dented the enemy dynamic and that the other side was able to replenish its forces and keep coming. Thus, the figures he had brought to Westmoreland (a general serving Lyndon Johnson, the most political of presidents, a man gearing up to run again) represented a distinct lack of American progress and even sug-

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gested that, despite the employment of 500,000 men and the heaviest bombing in the history of mankind, the war, as its critics suggested, was unwinnable. The first time Hawkins handed his estimates to Westmoreland they were rejected. So, as he testified, he made them a few percentage points more acceptable and brought these figures back and again Westmoreland rejected them. He could not send figures like this home, Westmoreland told him, because Congress and the press would not understand them. Instead, he gave Hawkins a ceiling for his estimates, one created entirely for political reasons. Hawkins was, he later told me, filled with eternal shame, for he had done the most dishonorable thing imaginable: he had changed intelligence estimates for political reasons.

It is one of the many ironies of this case that a flawed documentary containing some remarkable reporting begot, because of the commander's challenge, a legal process even more damaging to the commander than the original piece. I (and I assure you I am hardly alone) think Ms. Adler got it completely wrong. Not many of us who had covered the Vietnam War and whose work was attacked first by a series of administrations and more recently by revisionists, thought Adler's work, as Morgan oddly claims, marked by integrity. Only because *The New Yorker* does not print letters to the editor did her version of the trial pass without fierce public challenge by many, who, I assure you, are immune to the games of John Scanlon. (In fact, the response to her reporting was so negative on the part of people who normally accept *The New Yorker* as gospel that, as Richard Clurman has reported, then editor William Shawn wrote something of an apologetic to the critics, apparently intending to publish it, but finally backed off.) If there was damage done to her reputation, it was self-inflicted.

DAVID HALBERSTAM
NEW YORK, N.Y.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE?

◆ In your January/February issue you awarded me a Dart, alleging that I requested a Baptist minister, acquitted of disorderly conduct for "thumping his Bible too loudly on a local street," to repeat for the cameras "the performance that had led to his arrest."

The fact is that before I covered the minister's trial, he told me he would be back on the street preaching as soon as it was over. I was the only reporter covering the trial who knew this fact. I did not approach him after the trial in order to request he "repeat his performance"; I merely inquired whether he still intended to preach that afternoon. The minister looked at his watch and said he would be taking his wife and children home first. I told him that our deadline was approaching. He said, "Give me an hour and a half." When I again mentioned our time constraints, he changed his mind and said something like, "Let's do it now." He then went to a corner and started to sermonize.

DAN DINICOLA
WRGB-TV
SCHENECTADY, N.Y.

CORRECTIONS

◆ In my article "A Yen for Approval," I stated that *Washington Post* columnist Hobart Rowen had "gone to Japan under the auspices of the Japan Press Center." I have since received evidence that Rowen has never taken a trip to Japan at the Center's expense. I apologize to Rowen and to the readers of the *Columbia Journalism Review* for any suggestion that he did. John B. Judis

◆ A Dart to *The Sacramento Bee*, "for its honeyed coverage of local efforts to lure the Los Angeles Raiders football team to Sacramento," contained a statement to the effect that, in addition to the other sins of commission and omission cited, the *Bee* had failed to report on a study noted in *The Wall Street Journal* about the questionable economic benefits of publicly owned stadiums. Such a piece was in fact published, in the paper's Opinion section.

◆ A critique of coverage of the catastrophic health insurance controversy ("Not Catastrophic — But Bad Enough," CJR January/February) stated that, in writing about the issue in the October 11, 1989, *Washington Post*, columnist Jodie T. Allen had "[left] out the essential information that the elderly protesters saw no reason to pay the surtax because most of them already had medical insurance." Allen's column did in fact acknowledge this line of reasoning.

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FOLLOW-UP

THE COLOMBIAN PRESS HANGS IN

◆ The Colombian press has been on the front lines of the drug war for more than a decade (see "The Deadliest Beat," CJR, July/August 1987), a war that escalated rapidly after the killing of presidential candidate Carlos Galan last August. In 1989 alone, seventeen Colombian newspaper employees were assassinated and the publishing facilities of two major Colombian newspapers were destroyed by bombs — *Vanguardia Liberal*, in Bucaramanga, and *El Espectador*, in Bogotá.

How is the press holding up?

"We're doing the same stories as always," says *Espectador* publisher Luis Gabriel Cano, whose newspaper, the oldest in Colombia, sustained \$2.5 million in damage from a truck bombing in September. *Espectador* reporter María Jimena, however, says that journalists aren't taking nearly as many risks as they have in the past. "We know that if we run a story on the *narcotraficantes*

we will suffer. I have thousands of facts which I cannot use," she says. "The investigations that once made *El Espectador* a target have cooled down. We have not done any investigative reporting since our two people [Miguel Soler, a circulation manager, and Marta Lopez, an office manager] were killed in Medellín last October. If I write a story that reveals something about the narcotics, I am not the only one who will get killed."

The threat to human life is not the only problem facing the Colombian press. Publisher Cano says many of his best advertisers have pulled out after receiving threats themselves.

U.S. newspapers have taken ads in *El Espectador* as a show of support — "Eternal Life for the Colombia Press" read a quarter-page ad placed by *The Boston Globe*. In addition, an international fund has been created by the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the Inter-American Press Association to assist Colombia's press. More than \$1 million has been sent to Colombia so far, according to Bill Williamson, executive director of the IAPA, which manages the Press Freedom Emergency Fund. Williamson says Cano insisted that the money come in the form of a loan — "fifteen years, no interest" — instead of a donation.

Cano points out that his newspaper has begun circulating again in Medellín after the October shooting, and that circulation has climbed to 3,000 there (it was 15,000 before October). The best news? "We finally have a ceiling over our heads," says Jimena. "We've been working without one for three months."

Coke Newell

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JERUSALEM POSTSCRIPT

◆ Back in early 1989, when *The Jerusalem Post* went on the block, Hollinger, Inc., a Canada-based newspaper chain, was perceived by many employees of the generally liberal paper as the least threatening of three potential suitors (see "Look Who's Eyeing — and Buying — Israel's Newspapers," CJR, November/December).

But in December, six months after Hollinger bought the *Post*, editor Erwin Frenkel resigned, citing in his final column "irrevocable infringement by the publisher on the editor's authority." And in January twenty-eight editors and reporters resigned over what they said were the efforts of the new publisher to tilt the paper sharply to the right. Some of them cited, among other things, the killing of an article defending the paper against an attack by Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir. Publisher Yehuda Levy called the episode "just a power struggle" and promised to maintain "a free and independent newspaper."

Jay R. Begun

The Lower case

Why You Want Sex Changes as You Age

San Francisco Chronicle 1/13/90

Ralph Steiner Dead; A Still Photographer

The New York Times 7/15/86

FBI called in bomb threats to Adams

The Pittsburgh Press 1/4/90

Crack runner to diversify Vikings' offense

St. Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press Dispatch 10/13/89

Long disdained, Thais now gulping milk

The Anchorage Times 1/15/90

Police nab students with pair of pliers

Journal and Courier (Lafayette, Ind.) 2/1/90

Ruling holds quotes need no be exact

St. Petersburg Times 8/5/89

Where can a widower find a man?

Marin Independent Journal (San Rafael, Calif.) 12/28/89

2 suspects believed dead give TV interviews

The Arizona Daily Star 8/4/89

Miss Morris Wed
To A. R. Konowitz

The New York Times
11/5/89



Stacey Konowitz



Smuggler of beer loses case

The Tampa Tribune 12/25/89

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